



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



MONDAY — 17 OCT 2022

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	10/17 Norway: Russians taking photos illegally
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/norway-russians-caught-taking-photographs-illegally-91618117
GIST	<p>COPENHAGEN, Denmark -- Four Russian nationals — three men and one woman — have been arrested and held in custody after they were seen taking pictures of objects that are subject to a ban on photography in central Norway, police said Monday.</p> <p>Officers found “photographic equipment and relatively extensive image material” in their possession when their car was stopped on Oct. 11. Police didn’t say what they were photographing. The four — none of whom were identified — came to Norway from Finland, police said, adding that they said there were tourists.</p> <p>Authorities said there was no immediate link to two other cases of Russians detained elsewhere in Norway after police found them in possession of drones. Numerous drone sightings have been reported near Norwegian offshore oil and gas platforms in recent weeks.</p> <p>Police declined to give further details “due to the nature of the case.”</p> <p>There is heightened security around key energy, internet and power infrastructure following last month’s underwater explosions that ruptured two natural gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea that were built to deliver Russian gas to Germany.</p> <p>The blasts happened off both Sweden and Denmark, in international waters but within the countries’ exclusive economic zone. The damaged Nord Stream pipelines discharged huge amounts of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, into the air.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/17 Russia launches drone attacks
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/intense-fighting-flares-ukraines-donetsk-region-2022-10-17/
GIST	<p>KYIV, Oct 17 (Reuters) - Russia attacked the centre of Kyiv during morning rush hour with drones on Monday and shelled other cities around the country, the second time in a week it has unleashed strikes across Ukraine while its forces face setbacks on the battlefield.</p> <p>Soldiers fired into the air trying to shoot down the drones after blasts rocked central Kyiv. Residents fled for shelter. An anti-aircraft rocket could be seen streaking into the morning sky, followed by an explosion and orange flames.</p> <p>An official in Ukraine's presidential office said three people were killed in an attack on a residential building in Kyiv. Black smoke poured out of the windows of a blasted building and emergency service workers toiled to douse flames.</p> <p>Ukraine said the attacks were carried out by Iran-made 'suicide drones', which fly to their target and detonate. Russia's defence ministry said it had carried out a "massive" attack on military targets and energy infrastructure across Ukraine using high-precision weapons.</p> <p>Reuters saw pieces of a drone used in the attack that bore the words: "For Belgorod" - an apparent reference to Ukrainian shelling of a Russian region bordering Ukraine.</p>

Ukraine's Interior Minister Denys Monastyrskiy later said there had been deaths in other cities too in Monday's attacks.

The strikes came exactly one week after Russia unleashed its heaviest aerial bombardment of Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities since the start of the war - also during morning rush hour.

"All night and all morning the enemy terrorizes the civilian population. Kamikaze drones and missiles are attacking all of Ukraine. A residential building was hit in Kyiv," President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on the Telegram messaging app.

"The enemy can attack our cities, but it won't be able to break us. The occupiers will get only fair punishment and condemnation of future generations. And we will get victory."

Ukraine's military said it had [destroyed](#) 37 Russian drones since Sunday evening, or around 85% of those involved in attacks.

'REPREHENSIBLE'

A drone attack also hit the Everi marine terminal in the southern city of Mykolaiv late on Sunday, officials said, damaging sunflower storage tanks and setting aflame leaking oil.

"This is an entirely civilian facility. There is no military," said Andriy, 47, a senior manager who declined to give his last name. He said the attacks were part of a Russian effort to "destroy the economy and to destroy food security".

The new United Nations human rights chief, Volker Turk of Austria, said drone attacks on civilians had to [stop](#).

The U.S. embassy in Kyiv also condemned the "[desperate and reprehensible](#)" drone attacks. Russia denies targeting civilians.

Iran repeated on Monday its [denial](#) that it is supplying the drones to Russia. The Kremlin has not commented.

Some European Union foreign ministers, gathering for talks in Luxembourg on Monday, called for [new sanctions](#) against Iran if Tehran's involvement in Russia's war on Ukraine is proven.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak said Russia should be [expelled](#) from the Group of 20 major economies and other international groups following the drone attacks.

"Those who give orders to attack critical infrastructure to freeze civilians and organise total mobilization to cover the frontline with corpses, cannot sit at the same table with leaders of G20 for sure," he wrote on Twitter.

Russia has accused Ukraine of hitting targets in Belgorod region near the border. Pro-Russian news sources on Telegram reported that Ukraine had struck Belgorod's airport overnight. There was no immediate comment from Kyiv, which typically does not comment on incidents in Russia.

SHELLING

Elsewhere on Monday, renewed Russian shelling near the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, Europe's largest, caused it to be disconnected again from Ukraine's power grid, Ukrainian state energy firm Energoatom said.

The plant, which has often been shelled during the war, is occupied by Russian forces but operated by Ukrainian staff.

	<p>In southern central Ukraine, a large fire broke out at an energy facility in the Dnipropetrovsk region after an overnight missile hit, a local official said.</p> <p>British military intelligence said on Monday Russia was facing more acute logistical problems in southern Ukraine after a blast on Oct. 8 caused damage to a road-and-rail bridge linking mainland Russia to Crimea, the peninsula annexed by Moscow in 2014.</p> <p>Intense fighting is taking place around the eastern city of Bakhmut and the nearby town of Soledar, Zelenskiy said in his nightly video address on Sunday.</p> <p>Bakhmut has been a key target of Russia's armed forces in their slow move through the Donetsk region since taking the key industrial towns of Lysychansk and Sievierodonetsk in June and July. Soledar is located just north of Bakhmut.</p> <p>Ukrainian forces, helped by Western arms, have clawed back territory in the southern Kherson region - strategically vital as it links Crimea to the rest of Ukraine - and in parts of the northeast in a major counter-offensive over the past two months.</p> <p>Ukraine's battlefield successes prompted President Vladimir Putin earlier this month to announce a partial mobilisation, Russia's first since World War Two, a deeply unpopular move that encouraged many men to flee the country.</p> <p>On Monday, the mayor of Moscow, Sergei Sobyanin, said the Russian capital had "completed" its call-ups and further summons would no longer be issued.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Unseasonably cold air to sweep South
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/10/16/South-freezing-temperatures-near-record-lows/9091665941702/
GIST	<p>The coldest air of the season has the South in its sights and near-freezing temperatures could set new record lows across a wide swath of the region.</p> <p>AccuWeather meteorologists are tracking a powerful disturbance as it sweeps through the central and eastern United States. While this storm brings the first snowflakes of the season to parts of the Northeast, areas farther south will be in line for a dose of bitter cold that some may not be accustomed to handling so early in the season.</p> <p>"A shot of unseasonably cold air is headed for the mid-South early this week. Overnight lows are expected to be near- to below freezing Tuesday and Wednesday nights," summarized AccuWeather Meteorologist Joe Curtis.</p> <p>The period from Monday night through Thursday morning looks to be the most frigid in the South as residents of Nashville, Tenn., and Birmingham, Ala., will wake up to lows near or just below freezing each day.</p> <p>On Tuesday, a cold front will dive farther southward and cooler weather will arrive along much of the Gulf coast from the Florida Panhandle to far eastern Texas. However, the most significant blast of chilly Canadian air will remain a bit farther inland and away from the warmer water of the Gulf of Mexico which will temper the extreme chill closer to the coast.</p> <p>This round of wintry temperatures will be noteworthy for taking place so soon after a stretch of exceptional heat that blazed across some of the very same parts of the country around this time last month.</p> <p>"To put this into perspective, many of these places had record-high temperatures in the upper 90s and lower 100s just under a month ago," added Curtis.</p>

	<p>Indeed, Nashville set daily record highs of 99 and 100 on Sept. 20 and 21, with the latter becoming that city's latest 100-degree Fahrenheit day on record by a full 10 days.</p> <p>As the front progresses, the core of the winterlike chill will take a bit longer to press farther south into cities like Jackson, Mississippi, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, but both of those cities will approach their daily record lows in the lower to middle 30s by Wednesday morning.</p> <p>The freezing temperatures could come at a price as any late-season crops risk being damaged, especially in areas where farmers are simply not used to having to protect their crops from a freeze at this point in the year, according to AccuWeather meteorologists. Anyone on the fringes of the freezing temperatures with sensitive outdoor vegetation may also want to take precautions during this event, such as covering plants or bringing them indoors if possible.</p> <p>As the broad disturbance lifts into Canada and the front pushes well off the coast, high pressure will build into the regions and temperatures will rebound several degrees by Thursday. High temperatures should then rise close to average for many by Friday.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/17 Iran: did not provide drones to Russia
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/iran-says-it-has-not-provided-russia-with-drones-use-ukraine-2022-10-17/
GIST	<p>DUBAI, Oct 17 (Reuters) - Iran said on Monday that it had not provided Russia with drones to use in Ukraine.</p> <p>"The published news about Iran providing Russia with drones has political ambitions and it's circulated by western sources. We have not provided weaponry to any side of the countries at war," said Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Nasser Kanaani during a weekly press conference.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 OPEC+ members endorse production cut
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/opec-oil-price/2022/10/16/id/1092090/
GIST	<p>OPEC+ member states lined up on Sunday to endorse a steep production cut agreed this month after the White House, stepping up a war of words with Riyadh, claimed Saudi Arabia had pushed some other nations into the move.</p> <p>Iraq, OPEC's second largest exporter, said the decision was based on economic indicators and was taken unanimously.</p> <p>"There is complete consensus among OPEC+ countries that the best approach in dealing with the oil market conditions during the current period of uncertainty and lack of clarity is a pre-emptive approach that supports market stability and provides the future the guidance it needs," Iraq's state oil marketer SOMO said in a statement.</p> <p>Oman and Bahrain also said in separate statements that OPEC+ - which includes other major producers, notably Russia - had been unanimous in deciding on the 2 million barrels per day reduction.</p> <p>Algeria's energy minister called the Oct. 5 decision "historic" and he and OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al Ghais, currently visiting Algeria, expressed their full confidence in it, Algeria's Ennahar TV reported.</p> <p>The cut came despite oil markets being tight, with inventories in major economies at lower levels than when OPEC has cut output in the past.</p> <p>But some analysts have said recent volatility in crude markets could be remedied by a cut that would help attract investors to a market that was underperforming fundamentals.</p>

	<p>U.S. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said on Thursday that "more than one" OPEC member felt coerced by Saudi Arabia into the vote, adding that the cut would also increase Russia's revenues and blunt the effectiveness of sanctions imposed over its invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Oman's energy ministry said OPEC+ decisions were based purely on the realities of market supply and demand.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/17 NATO begins nuclear war exercises
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-putin-nato-95850790cb0387b06457d40ff97d767a
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS (AP) — NATO on Monday began its long-planned annual nuclear exercises in northwestern Europe as tensions simmer over the war in Ukraine and President Vladimir Putin's threat to use any means to defend Russian territory.</p> <p>Fourteen of NATO's 30 member countries were due to take part in the exercises, which the military alliance said would involve around 60 aircraft including fighter jets and surveillance and refueling planes.</p> <p>The bulk of the war games will be held at least 1,000 kilometers (625 miles) from Russia's borders.</p> <p>U.S. long-range B-52 bombers will also take part in the maneuvers, dubbed Steadfast Noon, which will run until Oct. 30. NATO is not permitting any media access.</p> <p>NATO said that training flights will take place over Belgium, which is hosting Steadfast Noon this year, as well as over the North Sea and the United Kingdom. The exercises involve fighter jets capable of carrying nuclear warheads, but do not involve any live bombs.</p> <p>The exercises were planned before Putin ordered Russian troops into Ukraine in February. Russia usually holds its own annual maneuvers around the same time, and NATO is expecting Moscow to exercise its nuclear forces sometime this month.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/17 London police getting away w/lawbreaking?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/world/scathing-report-says-uk-police-getting-away-with-lawbreaking/
GIST	<p>LONDON (AP) — Officers in London's Metropolitan Police force are getting away with breaking the law, and the system for investigating police misconduct is marred by racism and misogyny, a report said Monday.</p> <p>In the latest withering criticism of Britain's biggest police force, Louise Casey said some officers were "getting away both with misconduct but also criminal behavior" without being fired.</p> <p>"Cases are taking too long to resolve, allegations are more likely to be dismissed than acted upon, the burden on those raising concerns is too heavy, and there is racial disparity across the system, with white officers dealt with less harshly than Black or Asian officers," Casey said in a letter to police chief Mark Rowley.</p> <p>Casey, an experienced former government official, was asked to investigate the force after a string of controversies over alleged misogyny and racism among officers. She issued an interim report on Monday, with her full findings due next year.</p> <p>Last year a police officer, Wayne Couzens, was convicted of kidnapping, raping and murdering a woman who was walking home at night in London. Sarah Everard's slaying by a serving officer shocked the nation, and the police force's subsequent handling of vigils and protests against Everard's slaying — where women were detained for breaching coronavirus restrictions — drew strong criticism.</p>

Earlier this year, an investigation slammed a culture of misogyny, bullying and sexual harassment at one London police station, Charing Cross.

The force also has been criticized for the way it handled the case of two Black sisters murdered in a London park in 2020 — their bodies found by a family search party because police weren't looking for them — and for failing to stop serial killer Stephen Port, who drugged and killed four young men he met online.

In February, Cressida Dick resigned from her role as police chief after London Mayor Sadiq Khan said she was not doing enough to urgently overhaul the force and regain public confidence. In June the force was placed in "special measures" by the country's police watchdog.

Rowley, who replaced Dick, said the force fired between 30 and 50 officers and staff a year but that the number should be much higher.

"You have to come to the conclusion there must be hundreds of people that shouldn't be here, who should be thrown out," he said. "There must be hundreds who are behaving disgracefully, undermining our integrity and need ejecting."

The British government said it would review the system and procedures for firing police officers.

Rowley said the failings uncovered by Casey were "completely unacceptable."

"I am sorry to those we have let down: both the public and our honest and dedicated officers," he said in a letter to Casey. "The public deserves a better Met, and so do our good people who strive every day to make a positive difference to Londoners."

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HEADLINE	10/16 Ukraine reward for ex-Donetsk leader
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/ukrainian-intelligence-offers-100-000-110606138.html
GIST	<p>SUNDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2022, 14:06 - The Chief Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine guarantees the payment of US\$100,000 for the handover of Igor Girkin (Strelkov), the former "minister of defence of the Donetsk People's Republic" [Donetsk People's Republic] and a former leader of Donetsk militants, to Ukrainian captivity.</p> <p>Source: The Chief Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine on Telegram</p> <p>Quote: "It is known that one of the most notorious Russian terrorists has decided to resume his participation in the war against our country."</p> <p>Details: The Chief Intelligence Directorate recalls that Igor Girkin (Strelkov) is a Russian terrorist and the former so-called "minister of defence of the DPR".</p> <p>The Security Service of Ukraine and the Prosecutor General's Office have opened a number of cases against Girkin for terrorist activities, torture, murder, and violation of state sovereignty.</p> <p>He was also put on the international wanted list by the Netherlands in the case of the downing of the civilian Boeing 777 flight MH17.</p> <p>Previously: Earlier, a number of Ukrainians collected US\$50,000 as a reward for captive Girkin.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Explosions rip thru Russia border region
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/16/world/europe/ukraine-russia-belgorod-donetsk.html

Struggling on the battlefield in southern and eastern Ukraine, Russia felt war on its own territory on Sunday as more than a dozen explosions ripped through a Russian border region, and a series of blasts severely damaged the offices of Russia's puppet government in the Ukrainian city of Donetsk.

The strikes in the [Belgorod region next to Ukraine](#) and the destruction of the municipal administration building in Donetsk, a city firmly controlled by Russia and its proxies since 2014, sent a powerful signal that the mayhem unleashed by President Vladimir V. Putin's invasion is spreading far beyond the front lines.

The blasts, which Russia attributed to Ukrainian shelling, came a day after another sign of disarray in Russia's once-vaunted military machine: Two men opened fire on fellow Russian soldiers at a training camp in the Belgorod region, killing 11 and wounding 15 before being killed themselves.

The Russian Defense Ministry, in a statement cited by the state media outlets RIA Novosti and TASS, described the shootings as a terrorist attack. It said the two gunmen were from a former Soviet nation and had fired on the soldiers during target practice at a firing range.

The episodes, along with an Oct. 8 [attack on Russia's only bridge to Crimea](#), a region occupied by Moscow since 2014, added to a growing impression that what Mr. Putin declared a "special military operation" in February has spiraled in dangerous new directions.

Belarus — Ukraine's neighbor to the north and a close ally of Russia from whose territory it launched an abortive attack on the Ukrainian capital in February — announced on Sunday that trains carrying Russian troops had arrived in preparation for the formation of a new joint Russia-Belarus force. The Belarusian Defense Ministry [said on Telegram](#) that the "aviation component" of the new force, whose exact purpose has not been spelled out, had also started arriving from Russia.

Aleksandr G. Lukashenko, [Belarus's president](#), has repeatedly said that he does not want his military to join Russia's fight inside Ukraine, but analysts note that he emphatically denied that Russia would attack Ukraine from his territory just days before Russia did just that.

A renewed Russian offensive in northern Ukraine from Belarus would further expand a conflict that Russia initially expected to last just a few days but that has now raged for nearly eight months. The fighting has [shred the reputation](#) of Russia's military and of Mr. Putin, even among some of his supporters at home and abroad.

RIA Novosti reported that 16 explosions had hit Russia's Belgorod region, [an important staging ground](#) for its invasion. This was a sharp increase in what had previously been mostly isolated attacks, apparently by Ukraine, on Russian territory close to the border. Ukrainian officials did not comment, in keeping with an official policy of near-total silence about explosions inside Russia's internationally recognized border.

When a suspected Ukrainian attack destroyed part of Russia's bridge to Crimea this month, Mr. Putin ordered an immense retaliatory strike on Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities. Britain's military intelligence agency reported on Sunday that Russia had fired 80 cruise missiles in those strikes but added that its capacity for future retaliation with missiles was severely constrained by production problems.

"Russia's defense industry is probably incapable of producing advanced munitions at the rate they are being expended," the report said. Russia's depletion of its long-range missile stock, the agency added, "is likely to constrain their ability to strike the volume of targets they desire in future."

Russian forces, driven from much of Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region last month by [a lightning counteroffensive](#), have since slowed the advance of Ukrainian troops in the east. Russia has also recaptured some small villages and gained ground around the [Ukrainian-held town of Bakhmut](#) as it tries to reverse any narrative that it is losing.

Ukraine, which rarely reports setbacks and focuses instead on Russian defeats, said on Sunday that its forces had repelled a series of Russian attacks on settlements near Kramatorsk, a key Ukrainian-held city in the Donetsk region, and on Berestove, Soledar and Bakhmut, also in Donetsk.

Ukraine has also reported slow but steady gains around Kherson, the first major city captured by Russia at the start of the war.

Russian-appointed officials in occupied Kherson on Friday [advised civilians to evacuate](#), a move that the Ukrainian authorities trumpeted as a sign of panic in face of their army's advance toward the symbolically important city on the Dnipro River.

Sunday's violence in Belgorod and Donetsk city did not change the balance on the battlefield but did deliver a symbolic blow to Russian efforts to reset the narrative and to the Kremlin's desire to distance the Russian people from the war.

In Belgorod, colleges and businesses have conducted evacuation drills, local officials have evacuated towns and villages that have come under shelling and thousands of people from Ukraine have crossed the border to flee fighting, especially amid the recent Ukrainian counteroffensive. Sunday's explosions followed four successive days of sporadic strikes on the region, including what Russia says were Ukrainian attacks on an apartment building and a power station.

Donetsk city, the epicenter of Russian efforts to grab Ukraine's eastern Donbas region since 2014, has been hit before by Ukrainian artillery and sporadic street fighting, but Sunday's destruction of the main administrative building was the first time that a seat of Russian power in the city center had been hit so hard.

The Russian state-run news agency Tass reported that one man was killed and two others wounded when Ukrainian shelling struck the Donetsk city administration building.

The city is under the control of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic, a Russian proxy entity that Mr. Putin declared part of Russia on Oct. 5, along with three other regions. Last week an overwhelming majority of countries in the United Nations declared the land grab illegal; only four nations — North Korea, Belarus, Syria and Nicaragua — voted to support Russia.

Russia has claimed for years that Ukraine is committing "genocide" against ethnic Russians in the Donetsk region, an accusation unsupported by any evidence but used by Moscow as part of its pretext for invading Ukraine. It nonetheless seemed shocked by Sunday's strike in the center of Donetsk city, previously a mostly safe area that senior Kremlin officials have visited in recent weeks.

Images and [videos](#) posted on social media appeared to show debris scattered throughout the building, smoke pouring from broken windows and cars on fire in the parking lot.

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HEADLINE	10/17 Iran security forces protect ruling system
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/world/middleeast/iran-protests-revolutionary-guards.html
GIST	<p>The intensity of protests that have swept Iran over the past month, with calls to topple the Islamic Republic, have shaken the state. But in some ways, the country's authoritarian clerical rulers have been preparing for this moment since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, which established a conservative theocracy that has held firm until today.</p> <p>The revolution's founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, ordered the creation of the Revolutionary Guards force that same year to defend against coups or defections by the regular army.</p>

With hundreds of thousands of members today, the Guards are Iran's most powerful military force as well as major players in its economy. Many analysts argue that Iran is no longer a theocracy ruled by Shiite clerics, but a military state ruled by the Guards.

Along with the domestic police forces, a plainclothes militia known as the Basij, a volunteer force under the umbrella of the Revolutionary Guards, has been on the front lines for weeks, using brutal tactics to try to quash the protests, as it has done in past revolts.

But they have failed, and last week, a different breed of defenders began to show up on the streets of Tehran, the capital, and other cities — tough men in tan camouflage uniforms whom witnesses identified as members of an elite Revolutionary Guards commando unit known as Saberin.

Outside of the Basij, the Guards intervene in domestic policing only during episodes of extreme crisis. In effect, the regime has turned to its most loyal soldiers to retake control of the streets.

The fate of [this protest movement](#) — the biggest challenge to Iran's ruling system since 2009 — rests largely on the cohesion and loyalty of the Revolutionary Guards and the rest of the country's multilayered security forces. These forces have remained a formidable roadblock to toppling the country's hard-line clerical rulers.

The Guards are separate from and parallel to the national army — charged with protecting Iran's borders, the supreme leader and other top officials. Experts say they have become so deeply woven into Iran's economy and power structure that they have everything to lose if the system falls.

"They don't really care as an organization about losing the people, or unrest here or there," Afshon Ostovar, an associate professor of Middle Eastern history and national security affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School, said of the Revolutionary Guards. "They care about preserving the system, not preserving Iran."

Iran's armed forces consist of parallel layers that include the army, the security forces in charge of domestic policing and the Guards and their plainclothes Basij militia.

Until now, there have been almost no reports of any of the security forces defecting. But there have been indications that some of those who have been facing the protesters are worn down from weeks on the streets and uneasy about the level of violence, especially against young women, according to a person familiar with security discussions.

To prevent defections, military and police commanders have been warning the rank and file that if the ruling system collapses, the opposition will execute them, according to this person, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

But even if some officers do defect, the Guards and paramilitary Basij force will most likely keep up the fight to preserve the ruling system.

This month, [the Basij opened fire on students](#) and beat professors during a crackdown at Sharif University of Technology, a prestigious Tehran institution, according to witnesses and video. The militia was also [sent in to Tehran's notorious](#) Evin prison on Saturday night when an enormous fire broke out there, started during clashes in one of the wings. The prison holds hundreds of dissidents and political prisoners.

The Revolutionary Guards boast a formidable arsenal that includes ballistic missile and drone programs. Their senior commanders hold key political positions, including the speaker of Parliament, Mohammad Baqer Ghalibaf. Their much-feared intelligence branch arrests and intimidates dissidents and opposition political activists. Their overseas arm, the Quds Force, has recruited, trained and armed a [network of proxy militias](#), including from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and [Yemen](#) that could come to their aid.

They own factories and corporations and subsidiaries in banking, infrastructure, housing, airlines, tourism and other sectors. They help Iran circumvent sanctions through a web of smuggling operations. They are not accountable to the government, even when corruption dealings become public. Though Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is the commander in chief of all armed forces in the country, the Guards operate much like a regular military with their own hierarchy of command.

"There is no oversight of where their money comes from and what they spend it on, and you are talking about a huge portion of the Iranian state," said Roham Alvandi, an associate professor of international history at the London School of Economics.

The power and wealth of the Guards depend on the survival of the system, which is why they see the protests as such a threat.

"At the top, those people have a lot to lose if this turns violent or goes against them," Mr. Alvandi said.

The protests were set off last month by the death of [Mahsa Amini](#), 22, in the custody of the morality police. They arrested her for what they deemed as improperly covering her hair. Her family said that she died from blows to the head, but the Iranian government claimed that she had a sudden heart attack while in detention.

Rights group estimate that at least 240 people have been killed over the month of unrest, including 28 children. Iranian officials say that 24 security forces have also been killed.

The demonstrations across Iran have been [led by women](#) who burned the head scarves that they are required by law to wear and chanted, "Death to the dictator" and "Women, life, freedom." They vented their outrage at Iran's leaders over decades of oppression, mismanagement and corruption, and demanded more social freedoms, better economic prospects and the wholesale overthrow of the ruling system.

But so far, their rulers have not given an inch.

The supreme leader, who has the last say in all state matters, has told officials to ignore the protests and pursue business as usual in both domestic and foreign policy. In a speech on Friday, Ayatollah Khamenei insisted that the Islamic Revolution had given birth to an unshakable state.

"That seedling has today turned into a mighty tree, and no one should dare to think they can uproot it," he said.

Nevertheless, the deployment of the Revolutionary Guards to quell the protests was seen as an indication that the tree might be bending.

"The makeup of the forces in the streets has visibly changed," Javad Mogouei, a documentary filmmaker close to the Guards, [wrote Friday on Instagram](#). He said the Guards had sent out commandos from the elite Saber unit.

Mr. Mogouei, whose father and brother are high-ranking members of the Guards, has criticized the violence against protesters: riot police firing into crowds; a member of the security forces dragging a woman by her hair and striking her head with a baton; an actress leaving an interrogation with a bruised face.

In many instances, the protesters are fighting back, throwing rocks at the security forces, burning their cars and beating officers, according to witnesses and videos posted on social media.

Mr. Mogouei said that on Oct. 2 in Tehran, plainclothes militiamen fired rubber bullets at him and beat him so badly on the head that he passed out, all because he tried to intervene to protect a young female protester.

So far, the protesters have found ways to befuddle the security services.

The protests are small crowds and scattered across the country but widespread, making it difficult for the government to mount a large, definitive response. That has kept the movement going, but it could struggle to keep it up if it does not develop clear leadership and clear, unified objectives, said Sanam Vakil, the deputy director of the Middle East and North Africa program at Chatham House.

The Middle East's recent history provides multiple examples of similar popular movements quashed by repressive states. Successful pro-democracy uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt were diverted by strongman presidents, Yemen collapsed into civil war and Syria illustrated the vast carnage that a regime can inflict on its people to ensure its survival.

Iran's security services could also resort to even more force if they fear that their existence is threatened. But that prospect makes some inside the ruling system uneasy.

"We are telling officials in meetings that if you don't change course and realize that the legitimacy of the system is at stake, the only way the Islamic Republic can remain in power is to kill several hundred people every few months," Gheis Ghoreishi, an analyst who has advised the government, told The New York Times.

"It is becoming very difficult and even impossible to defend the domestic policies," he added.

In the last major wave of nationwide protests, in November 2019, security forces killed more than 400 people, according to rights groups, which say the actual numbers are probably much higher than that. Most were shot at close range in the head and neck over less than one week, according to these groups.

But this time, women and young Iranians are leading the protests, and the scenes of violence — sometime lethal — against them have prompted calls for the armed forces to put down their guns and to stop the killing.

"I don't think that Iran's military and security forces, as brutal as they can be, are prepared to be ready to be known as the murderers of Iran's daughters," said Mr. Ostovar, the history professor. "They have to kill a lot of women to get this extinguished, and they can't kill them all."

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HEADLINE	10/16 China's leader strikes a defiant note
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/16/world/asia/china-congress-xi-jinping.html
GIST	<p>Xi Jinping defended his hard-line reign on Sunday, presenting himself to a congress of China's ruling elite as the leader whose tough policies had saved the nation from the ravages of the pandemic and was now focused on securing China's rise amid multiplying global threats.</p> <p>Mr. Xi, who is poised to claim a groundbreaking third term as leader at the end of the weeklong Communist Party congress, used his opening report to argue that his decade in power had brought historic gains. He pointed to the party's campaign against corrupt officials, its cleanup of the environment and its crackdown on antigovernment protesters in Hong Kong as key victories. He described Chinese foreign policy as a series of successes in fending off Western "bullying" and protectionism, apparently referring to disputes over human rights, technology and Beijing's claim on Taiwan.</p> <p>But his praise was coupled with a somber warning that the nation must stand united behind the party to cope with a world he depicted as increasingly turbulent — and hostile. And though he did not mention the United States by name, his distrust of the world's other great power was an unmistakable backdrop to that exhortation.</p> <p>"Be mindful of dangers in the midst of peace," Mr. Xi said. "Get the house in good repair before rain comes, and prepare to undergo the major tests of high winds and waves, and even perilous, stormy seas."</p>

Speaking to a hall filled with delegates in face masks, he made no concessions to critics who have argued that his relentless “zero Covid” policies of lockdowns, mass testing and intrusive surveillance have pushed China into a cul-de-sac of unsustainable restrictions and economic damage. He argued instead that such tough policies, and the party’s dominance in nearly all aspects of everyday life, was what was needed to protect China’s 1.4 billion people.

He outlined a vision of the Communist Party leading China toward superpower status, saying that sweeping mobilization by the state was needed to ward off international threats circling around China. He told the congress that he would push for faster homegrown technological innovation, and would upgrade China’s already formidable domestic security apparatus.

He called for China to exert further influence on world affairs directly and through institutions like the United Nations, while at the same time cautioning that the coming years would pose new challenges for his country.

Mr. Xi gave his keynote report less than a week after President Biden [issued a long-awaited national security strategy](#), which identified China as a threat to American security and global primacy. But as is usual for party leaders’ big speeches to congress, Mr. Xi did not mention the United States, nor did he say anything about Russia’s floundering invasion of Ukraine. Still, Chinese officials were expected to draw from Mr. Xi’s speech a warning to stand up to Washington over issues like recent American restrictions on the export of semiconductor technology to China and American support for Taiwan.

“His stance this morning showed that U.S.-China confrontation will continue,” said Willy Lam, a longtime analyst of Chinese politics in Hong Kong who is a senior fellow at the Jamestown Foundation. “Every time Xi Jinping speaks, he emphasizes the increasingly complicated and harsh international climate, and the implication is clear.”

In a sign of Mr. Xi’s singular focus on stifling perceived threats to China and party rule, Mr. Xi’s full report mentioned “national security” 26 times, more even than the 18 times in his longer report to the 2017 congress. In a congress report given by Mr. Xi’s predecessor, Hu Jintao, a decade ago, “national security” got four mentions.

The message behind Mr. Xi’s rhetoric was that China must “continue to circle the wagons — that a strong party leadership is necessary to fend off these increasing external threats,” said William Klein, a former U.S. diplomat with long experience with China who now works for FGS Global. “There’s a broad, stable, near-consensus majority in China now that truly believes the United States has the intention to disrupt China’s modernization drive.”

Since coming to power in 2012, Mr. Xi has built a powerful security apparatus that employs extensive networks of cameras and other surveillance equipment, backed by artificial intelligence, to monitor dissent online and on the streets. Threats, in Mr. Xi’s view, exist everywhere — not just enemies at the border, but in subversive ideas in classrooms and museums.

“The systems for safeguarding national security were inadequate,” Mr. Xi said in describing the situation when he took power. “National security is the foundation of national rejuvenation.”

Mr. Xi also repeated China’s longstanding demand that Taiwan, the self-governed island democracy of 24 million people, accept unification under Beijing. He reiterated that China wanted to gain Taiwan peacefully, but would never rule out force, which he said could be needed against external intervention — a clear reference to the United States and its allies. Tensions over Taiwan rose significantly in August when Nancy Pelosi, the speaker of the House of Representatives, [visited the island](#) and China [launched intimidating military exercises](#).

“‘America’ was not mentioned from the beginning to the end, but almost everything points to America,” said Wang Hsin-hsien, a professor who specializes in Chinese politics at the National Chengchi University in Taipei, said of Mr. Xi’s comments.

The policy implications of Mr. Xi’s report will take time to become clearer, as his broad rhetoric is converted into policy proposals and legislation. But some of the most immediate consequences may be in China’s tech sector, which Mr. Xi said must step up efforts to master key technologies crucial for economic and military competition. Mr. Xi’s comments suggested that the state, not private industry, would guide key initiatives.

“He is doubling down on state-led innovation and trying to throw a bone to the country’s innovative tech elite to assure them that they still matter, but the new incentives are not clear,” said Paul Triolo, a China and tech policy expert at Albright Stonebridge Group.

When Mr. Xi turned his attention to China’s domestic economy, struggling with a painful slowdown and job losses this year, his proposals were more cautiously and vaguely worded, suggesting some desire to avoid alarming domestic and foreign investors.

He committed himself once more to his theme of “common prosperity,” a longtime Communist Party slogan that Mr. Xi has adopted as his response to China’s huge gulf between rich and poor. But Mr. Xi continued to avoid defining what the policy might entail.

He steered clear of any mention of introducing an inheritance tax, a tax on investment gains or a national tax on real estate — three measures long suggested by economists as ways to rebalance wealth and the overall economy. Mr. Xi spoke instead of the need to help people find jobs, and of the intrinsic value of hard work.

“It gives priority to employment — that is, not a welfare state,” said Bert Hofman, a former China director of the World Bank who is now the director of the East Asian Institute at the National University of Singapore.

Mr. Xi also gave a very brief mention to “dual circulation,” his stance that China should rely primarily on its domestic economy for growth while also maintaining a separate engine of international trade. Foreign governments and multinational corporations have worried that the concept could be a formula for reserving the domestic market for Chinese companies.

Even as Mr. Xi was doubling down on policies that critics have said are hurting China’s global and economic stature, the effects of those policies were playing out in real time.

As Mr. Xi described the country’s zero-Covid policy as a successful “all-out people’s war,” making clear that the government had [no plans to shift from it](#) soon, tens of millions of people across China were [under some form of movement restriction](#).

Many districts of Shanghai, which emerged from a bruising citywide lockdown only in June, have shuttered entertainment venues as cases resurge there. In Beijing, where cases are also spreading despite the government’s determination to insulate the capital, the authorities have ramped up checks on mandatory regular coronavirus tests. Traffic was thin on Sunday morning in the city center, and normally bustling malls quiet.

The authorities’ strict controls on the internet, which Mr. Xi hailed on Sunday as successfully bringing about “fundamental transformation in the ideological sphere,” have dissuaded many Chinese from speaking about politics, online or offline. Despite ample propaganda about the party congress in the capital, residents seemed determined to avoid weighing in on the proceedings.

“In China, politics is like a closely guarded secret. People don’t talk about it much, and also are unwilling to get swept up in it,” said Bruce Zheng, a Beijing resident who works in public relations.

“In the past, people would always say that Beijing taxi drivers loved to talk about politics,” he added. “Now, taxi drivers don’t talk about politics. Nobody talks about politics.”

The contrast between the official heralding of the congress and the public’s relative silence was also apparent online. The official Weibo accounts of the Yunnan police and Shanghai fire departments shared photographs of their employees studiously watching a broadcast of the opening ceremony. But room for regular users to share their thoughts was strictly limited. On Baidu Tieba, a popular discussion forum, a search for Mr. Xi’s name produced an error message.

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HEADLINE	10/16 Thousands protest in Paris on rising costs
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/16/world/europe/paris-protest-inflation.html
GIST	<p>PARIS — Tens of thousands of people marched in Paris on Sunday to protest rising living costs, amid an increasingly tense political atmosphere marked by strikes at oil refineries and nuclear plants that threaten to spread further.</p> <p>The march had been planned long before the strikes by a coalition of left-wing parties eager to capitalize on the cost-of-living crisis and assert itself as the leading opposition force to President Emmanuel Macron. But on Sunday, organizers signaled that they intended to build momentum from the climate of social unrest to increase pressure on Mr. Macron’s government.</p> <p>“We need to be tougher,” said David Guiraud, a lawmaker from France Unbowed, the hard-left party that led Sunday’s protest. He added that the government could “no longer decide on its own.”</p> <p>Mr. Macron finds himself in a perilous situation. He is simultaneously facing discontent over shortages at gas stations, along with labor strikes and a fierce opposition in the National Assembly, the lower and more powerful house of Parliament, which may try to bring down his government this week over a disputed budget bill.</p> <p>“We are entering a particular and quite extraordinary cycle,” said Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of France Unbowed, as he led the protest on Sunday. He noted “the great convergence” among the strikes, the crisis in Parliament and the march.</p> <p>At the heart of the matter are rising living costs. Already a key topic in this spring’s French presidential campaign, it has now moved to the top of French people’s concerns, according to a recent study, far ahead of more traditional issues like climate change, security or immigration.</p> <p>Though lower than in the rest of Europe, inflation in France has surpassed 6 percent, jacking up the prices of staples like meat and pasta. Parliament passed an inflation relief package this summer, but it has not completely offset soaring energy costs, which are rising because of Russia’s war in Ukraine.</p> <p>“It’s unbelievable,” said Gwenola Leroux, a 63-year-old retired literature professor, who marched on Sunday. “Every time I buy basic necessities, I wonder if they got the prices wrong.” She was holding a cardboard sign on which she had written a fable inspired by the 17th-century poet La Fontaine, denouncing inflation.</p> <p>“Adieu, water, lettuce, saucisson, electricity,” it read.</p> <p>The situation has been compounded by strikes at many refineries, which have left nearly a third of all gas pumps across the country fully or partly dry and have forced drivers to line up for hours at stations, sometimes in chaotic scenes.</p> <p>Workers have been picketing for higher wages in line with inflation, as well as a greater share of the surging profits of energy giants. But their demands have resonated far beyond refineries, prompting nuclear plants and railroad workers to stop work, as well, or plan to.</p>

The left has seemed eager to use the social unrest to bounce back politically from scandals involving [domestic violence and harassment by prominent lawmakers](#). Members of France Unbowed have been trying to coalesce the discontent, with some traveling to strike sites in northern France to call for an amplification of the protests.

“You can count on us at the National Assembly to echo these fights, to carry your voice and to be at your side,” Thomas Portes, another France Unbowed lawmaker, told striking workers at a TotalEnergies refinery near Le Havre on Thursday.

Because of strategic disagreements, the main trade unions did not participate in Sunday’s march; they have instead called for a general strike next Tuesday. Mr. Mélenchon echoed that call on Sunday, describing the situation as the emergence of a “new Popular Front,” a reference to the broad leftist coalition that rose to power in France during the interwar period.

The march, which began at the Place de la Nation and ended at the Place de la Bastille, in eastern Paris, had all the hallmarks of a classic French leftist protest: a sea of red flags, antifascist slogans and booths selling revolutionary essays.

A participant stood out among the politicians leading the cortege: [Annie Ernaux](#), this year’s winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, who is an outspoken supporter of the left.

Several lawmakers said the march was meant to put pressure on the government as a high-risk week began in the National Assembly, where Mr. Macron no longer has an absolute majority.

The government faces a potential crisis over the contested budget bill. Debate on the measure has appeared to stall, with most of the opposition vowing not to vote for it. On Sunday evening, Élisabeth Borne, France’s prime minister, said the government would “probably” use special constitutional powers to get the bill through without a vote, possibly as soon as this week.

But that mechanism would also allow members of the opposition to put forward a vote of no confidence. Although the risk of a government collapse appears remote because the center-right opposition seems reluctant to support the move, Mr. Guiraud, the France Unbowed lawmaker, confirmed on Sunday that the left-wing coalition would present such a vote.

“We’re ready,” he said.

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HEADLINE	10/16 Pakistan fumes over Biden’s comment
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/16/pakistans-fumes-over-bidens-most-dangerous-nation/
GIST	<p>Another offhand comment from President Biden has landed him in hot water overseas, as officials in Pakistan summoned the U.S. ambassador over the weekend to explain why Mr. Biden considers their country “one of the most dangerous in the world.”</p> <p>Mr. Biden, speaking at a private Democratic Party reception in California on Thursday, was trying to highlight his long experience in foreign policy in the Senate and the executive branch, including his frequent encounters with Chinese President Xi Jinping.</p> <p>The Chinese leader “is a guy who understands what he wants but has an enormous, enormous array of problems” in foreign policy.</p> <p>Among those problems, Mr. Biden went on, were how to deal with problem countries like Russia and “what I think is maybe one of the most dangerous nations in the world: Pakistan.”</p> <p>Pakistan, he added, was a nation with “nuclear weapons [but] without any cohesion.”</p>

Shortly after the White House published a transcript of the president's remarks, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome was being summoned to the Pakistan's Foreign Office for an official demarche to explain Mr. Biden's comment..

"I am surprised by the remarks of President Biden," Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari told a news briefing Saturday in Karachi. "I believe this is exactly the sort of misunderstanding that is created when there is lack of an engagement."

Mr. Bhutto-Zardari acknowledged Mr. Biden was not speaking at a public, official event and added, "I don't believe that this should negatively impact the relations between Pakistan and the United States."

But former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan took to Twitter to defend the country's safety protocols for the country's nuclear arsenal and to take a shot at Washington in the process.

"[H]aving been prime minister, I know we have one of the most secure nuclear command and control systems," Mr. Khan tweeted. "Unlike the U.S., which has been involved in wars across the world, when has Pakistan shown aggression since [obtaining nuclear weapons]?"

Pakistan and the U.S. were critical but wary allies during the 20-year war against the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan, but both sides are recalibrating the relationship following the U.S. military pullout in 2021.

Islamabad has moved closer to China politically and economically in recent years, raising alarms in Washington.

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HEADLINE	10/17 Animal shelters face increase in surrenders
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/oct/17/pets-returned-inflation-guinea-pigs
GIST	<p>The great pet adoption boom peaked in April and May 2020 with nearly one in five US households, or 23 million, giving animals new homes during the pandemic, according to the ASPCA. But as our return to a sense of normalcy has coincided with historic inflation rates, pet owners are forced to re-evaluate their priorities.</p> <p>Pet food costs have outpaced general inflation by 0.6% (9.1% versus 8.5% in total Consumer Price Index last month) and a single surprise veterinary bill can launch 42% of pet owners into debt, according to a recent Forbes study. As a result, shelters around the US are seeing an increase in owner surrenders and a steep decline in adoptions with no sign of improving.</p> <p>"We're packed right now. We're putting animals in cages in the hallways," explains Katy Hansen, director of marketing and communications at New York's Animal Care Centers (ACC), a no-kill shelter that has seen a 25% uptick in surrenders this year over last. "It's really sad, people crying, it's a part of their family. But if you're choosing between feeding your family and feeding your pet, your choices are limited."</p> <p>Some have asserted that the uptick in surrenders can be blamed on a kind of "buyers remorse" following the adoption boom though shelter professionals disagree, offering instead that pet owners are just desperate to cut costs. Most people who adopted during the pandemic have kept their pets – 90% of dog owners and 85% of cat owners, to be exact (as of 2021). There is, however, one animal with less staying power.</p> <p>"Guinea pigs purchased during the pandemic are being returned in droves," Hansen explains. "On average, at this point in the year, we've taken in 200 guinea pigs. This year we're over 650."</p>

There are various culprits for the sudden guinea pig influx, but almost all roads lead back to pet stores. Chain pet stores and mom and pop shops alike stock a revolving door of them – the furry rodents are easily bred and sell for about \$40.

Unlike animal shelters, pet stores don't vet potential buyers who are probably thinking a smaller animal that is content to spend its life in a confined space would require less work, energy, and money than a dog or cat.

But guinea pigs need a decent-sized enclosure along with near daily changes to their bedding and hay. Vet bills can also be more expensive since it's difficult to find a provider with the appropriate expertise. Many potential buyers or adopters approach guinea pigs as a temporary hobby rather than a substantial investment of time and money (they can live up to 10 years). The problem is owners become bored with them.

ACC is the only shelter in New York accepting guinea pigs. Last year they worked with the organization Voters for Animal Rights to garner support for a bill that would ban the sale of guinea pigs in New York pet stores. So far the hard work is done – the bill has received the necessary supermajority vote – but city council is stalling in the final step of the approval process. ACC is desperately hoping for a hearing soon. Overall, shelters are in need themselves, experiencing staff shortages, veterinary care shortages, reduced adoptions and reduced interest in foster care.

Even if ACC weren't plagued by returns of guinea pigs, they'd still be overwhelmed by the more expected cats and dogs. "All these surrenders coming in and it's really hard on staff. When someone walks in with their pet and you see the look in the pet's eye, not knowing what's happening but you know what's happening – it's heartbreaking," says Hansen.

While surrenders are up, overall intake is not higher than pre-pandemic numbers. But there has been a substantial drop in adoptions, which compounds the overcrowding issue. "We have a high population at all times," Hansen explains. This is partly due to the backlog of animals needing to be spayed and neutered across the country after services were slowed down or completely stopped during pandemic shutdowns.

"I'm not sure there's a light at the end of the tunnel," admits Hansen. But she says there are ways, even just through small acts of kindness, to make a contribution. "We need support from the community. We need people to volunteer, we need people to share the profiles of our animals. If you have a neighbor who's struggling with their pet, help them! If you have an elderly neighbor, walk their dog, offer to get pet food."

And it's not all grim. Most shelters around New York have remarkably high success rates when placing pets in forever homes. ACC boasts a 93% placement rate for cats and dogs and 96% for guinea pigs – numbers that make the hard work worth it. Before getting into animal care work, Hansen worked on Wall Street for 26 years – but today choosing the shelter over the stock market is a no-brainer. She says: "I've never felt more fulfilled than working in animal welfare. It really does make you feel good about your path in life."

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HEADLINE	10/17 Day 236 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/17/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-236-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said a "very severe" situation persists in the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions, with the "most difficult" fighting near the town of Bakhmut. The attacks came as Russia's war in Ukraine nears the eight-month mark.• Pro-Kremlin officials on Sunday blamed Ukraine for a rocket attack that struck the mayor's office in Donetsk, a city controlled by the separatists, while Ukrainian officials said Russian rocket strikes hit a town near the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, among other targets.

- **More than 30 settlements across Ukraine have been hit by Russian strikes in the last day**, according to the Ukrainian military. Two schools in the southern Zaporizhzhia region were reportedly destroyed in the strikes, which targeted civilian areas.
- **The Ukrainian military said the estimated number of Russians killed since the start of the war has reached 65,000.** Sunday morning's update from the general staff of the Ukrainian armed forces said the death toll had risen by 300 over the last 24 hours.
- **In Ukraine, 423 children have been killed since the start of the invasion** the [office of the Ukrainian prosecutor general](#) said. It added that a further 810 children had been injured in the conflict and that the highest number of child casualties were in the regions of Donetsk, Kharkiv, and Kyiv.
- **Ukraine has succeeded in maintaining its energy stability after Russian attacks last week that targeted key parts of its infrastructure**, Ukrainian prime minister Denys Shmyhal said. In a [post on Facebook](#), Shmyhal said that in the first three days of the week, Russia launched up to 130 missile and drone strikes against civilian and energy facilities, particularly in the capital, Kyiv.
- **Russia is "probably incapable of producing advanced munitions at the rate they are being expended"**, according to the latest update from the UK Ministry of Defence. The ministry said attacks like those launched across [Ukraine](#) on 10 October, in which Russia fired over 80 cruise missiles, represent a "further degradation of Russia's long-range missile stocks, which is likely to constrain their ability to strike the volume of targets they desire in future".
- **US and allied security officials believe Iran has agreed to provide Russia with surface-to-surface missiles and attack drones** intended for use in Ukraine. The topic is due to be discussed by EU foreign ministers in a meeting in Luxembourg on Monday. In a statement, the Iranian foreign minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, "emphasised that the Islamic republic of Iran has not and will not provide any weapon to be used in the war in Ukraine".
- **The Belarusian defence ministry has said just under 9,000 Russian troops will be stationed in Belarus** as part of a "regional grouping" of forces to protect its borders. Last week, the Belarusian president, Alexander Lukashenko, said his troops would be deployed with Russian forces near the Ukrainian border as part of a "joint grouping", citing what he said were threats from [Ukraine](#) and the west.
- **Russian soldiers have reportedly shot dead Ukrainian conductor Yuriy Kerpatenko in his home** after he [refused to take part in a concert](#) in occupied Kherson. The concert was "intended by the occupiers to demonstrate the so-called 'improvement of peaceful life' in Kherson", Kyiv's culture ministry said in a [statement](#) on its Facebook page.
- **US-based thinktank The Institute for the Study of War has said Russia continues to conduct "massive, forced deportations" of Ukrainians** that "likely amount to a deliberate ethnic cleansing campaign". In its [latest assessment](#) of the conflict, the Institute for the Study of War notes that Russian officials have "openly admitted to placing children from occupied areas of Ukraine up for adoption with Russian families".
- **Poverty in Ukraine has increased tenfold since the start of the war**, a top World Bank official has said. Arup Banerji, the bank's regional director for eastern Europe, said Russian attacks on civilian infrastructure away from the frontlines of the conflict have complicated the already dire economic situation.

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HEADLINE	10/17 Russia targets Ukraine energy grid
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/17/russia-targets-ukraines-energy-grid-as-winter-approaches
GIST	<p>Russia's call for the evacuation of civilians from Kherson oblast last week may have been billed as merely temporary by one local official, but it is the next step in a gradual retreat from the west of the Dnipro, where its forces have been going backwards since the beginning of the month.</p> <p>Ukraine has been mounting a counteroffensive, pressing and pushing against the Russian lines since the beginning of September, but with little material success until the first part of October, when the invaders gave up a swathe of territory up to 30 miles deep north-west of Kherson city to a new front, north of the village of Mylove.</p>

If that was an attempt to rationalise the frontlines, it clearly has not succeeded in the light of the evacuation announcement, and there has been speculation in some western quarters that Kherson itself could be recaptured as soon next week, although that sort of talk is perhaps highly optimistic.

It may be the case that [Russia](#) is simply girding itself for an urban defence of the city, allowing its lines to contract and tie up Ukraine in a costly autumn battle. It will be easier to defend the city than the open country around it, creating a dilemma for Kyiv as to how far it is willing to blast its way to success.

But for the moment it is the frontline to watch in the nearly eight-month-long war, where Ukraine appears to hold the initiative on land. Russia also continues to come under pressure in the north-east part of the front too, where Ukraine is seeking to push towards Kreminna, after taking Lyman, and Svatove, a transport hub.

Russia, however, still holds the initiative in the air. Last Monday, in response to the explosion at the Kerch strait bridge into Crimea, it unleashed a deadly hail of missiles aimed at Kyiv and other major cities. But while that captured headlines around the world, the military utility was closer to nil and in isolation will have had no meaningful psychological effect on the country's civilian population.

Russia is believed to be running short of guided missiles in particular. Western officials said on Friday they agreed broadly with [a Ukrainian assessment](#) that Moscow had used up about two-thirds of its stocks, and has only 124 out of 900 medium-range Iskanders left. "We think that's about right," one said, although such conclusions are impossible to verify.

There is growing evidence that Russia is using repurposed systems such as the S-300 nominally for air defence to attack ground targets, in places such as the city of Zaporizhzhia, [as was claimed overnight](#) by the region's governor, Oleksandr Starukh. But the clearest sign that original stocks are short is Russia's deployment of Shahed-136 drones acquired from Iran, grimly striking at places such as Zaporizhzhia city and at other urban sites.

The Shahed-136s first appeared in the war in September, and although they are described as kamikaze drones, they are better thought of as small cruise missiles with a relatively limited destructive capacity given their 50kg payload. Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said Russia had bought 2,400, a large-sounding number, but their numbers are being depleted fast.

Justin Bronk, an airpower specialist at the Rusi thinktank, says the drones "are difficult to consistently intercept" but their airspeed is slow relative to cruise missiles, meaning air defences will always have a chance. "Ultimately, they offer a way for Russia to cause more civilian and military casualties in Ukraine, but will not turn the tide of the war," he added.

However, the bloody success of last Monday's attack – an estimated 15 were killed that day alone – reveals the limitations in Kyiv's air defence. It is not clear why it has taken so long, but the US responded last week by saying it would expedite the delivery of the first two of eight promised Nasams air defence systems, which are deemed good enough to protect the Pentagon.

There are growing signs that Russia is trying to target Ukraine's energy and other utility grids as the winter and the country's "heating season" begins – a point not lost on the country's anxious defenders either, where there are already calls for people to reduce electricity use between 5pm and 11pm in the evenings. In the last month power supplies to Kharkiv, Kyiv and Lviv have at times been affected.

Drones such as the Shahed-136s are more effective against such static targets than against armies and for Moscow the disruptive impact on Ukraine may be greater. At the same time Russia will badly want to halt Ukraine's battlefield advances at least until heavy late-autumn rains are expected to prompt some sort of a pause.

	<p>Nothing else is working for Moscow. Russia has been flinging mobilised conscripts from its half-a-million draft into the frontline, and the first, depressing, reports have emerged of forced recruits dying in places such as Lysychansk with minimal or non-existent training.</p> <p>Ukraine's frontline progress is not rapid at present, but it is steady and the concern has to remain that an under-pressure Russia will resort to stepping up its targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure because that is the only tactic it has that seems to have, from its point of view, any impact.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 'Defund police' CM wants SPD protection?
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3675116/rantz-police-defunding-seattle-demands-protection-condo-targeted-feces-sawant/
GIST	<p>The socialist city councilwoman who led the efforts to defund and demonize the Seattle Police Department is again asking for special treatment.</p> <p>City councilwoman Kshama Sawant's condo has reportedly been defaced with feces at least four times this month. The last incident, on Oct. 13, is being investigated as a political or racial bias incident. It's unclear if the genesis of the feces is human or animal.</p> <p>Now, Sawant is demanding the SPD to post officers outside her home from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. until the suspect is arrested, according to multiple sources speaking to the Jason Rantz Show on the condition of anonymity.</p> <p>Sawant's request comes as the department is dangerously understaffed, thanks to her efforts to defund and dismantle the department since 2020. The SPD has lost at least 135 officers this year — nearly 500 since 2020 — and cannot meet staffing minimums across any precinct and watch.</p> <p>Concurrently, the city is experiencing a crime surge that's resulted in a number of emphasis patrols — when they can spare the staff — in various neighborhoods.</p> <p>Sawant did not respond to a weekend request for comment. It's unclear if she has received protection yet or if she will at all. SPD would not confirm the request was made.</p> <p>This isn't the first time Sawant asked for special treatment from the department she publicly loathes.</p> <p>After getting anonymous threatening and rude emails, Sawant demanded that overburdened detectives focus their attention on tracking the suspect down.</p> <p>And Sawant's disdain for police is well-documented.</p> <p>Sawant claimed black Seattleites are “targeted in fatal police shootings, arrests, and mass incarceration” by Seattle police. And she's quick to label innocent cops “murderers.” She even went so far as to baselessly claim police were sent to Black Lives Matter rallies-turned-riots with “instructions to orchestrate violence, including repeated practices and patterns of repression and violence, with officers wearing riot gear and carrying tear gas spray canisters.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Seattle breaks heat record; wildfires, smoke
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/weather/after-seattles-hot-and-smoky-sunday-some-relief-on-the-way/
GIST	<p>Seattle broke the record Sunday for the hottest temperature this late in the year, as heat-driven wildfires threatened homes in Southwest Washington and continued to send smoke across the region.</p> <p>Still, hope remained for a slight cooling overnight.</p>

The official high reached 88 degrees Sunday at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, making it the latest day in the calendar year at or above 80 degrees on record, National Weather Service meteorologist Jeff Michalski said.

The previous record at Sea-Tac, set Oct. 14, 1961, was 80 degrees.

Sunday's temperature also eclipsed the previous record high temperature for Oct. 16: 72 degrees, set in 2018.

Gusty winds from the east continued in the Cascade foothills and brought wildfire smoke into the Puget Sound region Sunday. Throughout most of the region, air quality was considered unhealthy for sensitive groups. Depending on the location, it ranged from unhealthy for everyone to "good," according to the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency.

"The critical fire weather conditions are in place: dry fuels, combined with low relative humidity ... along with gusty east winds," Michalski said. "It drives the rapid growth on the fires we're seeing."

The extreme fire conditions stretched into the south Cascades, where authorities expanded an evacuation order Sunday. Clark County officials were warning people near the growing Nakia Creek fire northeast of Camas to evacuate or prepare to leave their homes.

There were 2,900 homes under Level 3 (go now) evacuations as of Sunday evening, and a total of nearly 40,000 homes under some category of evacuation notice, according to Eric Frank, a spokesperson for the Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency.

As of Sunday evening, the fire had grown to 2,000 acres, according to Trina Contreras, spokesperson for the state Department of Natural Resources. Washougal and Mount Pleasant school districts announced school closures for Monday.

About 100 people, supported by water-dropping helicopters, were battling the fire Sunday evening. Washington state issued a mobilization order allowing any firefighting agency to dispatch resources to the blaze.

People may track information about the fire on the websites of the Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency and the state Department of Natural Resources.

Other fires in the region spread over the weekend.

The Loch Katrine fire, just 30 miles east of Seattle on the edge of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, grew to more than 2,000 acres Saturday night, the U.S. Forest Service said Sunday. The fire was burning on private forest land in the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and was not threatening communities or structures on Sunday. Forest Road 57 and the Sunday Lake Trail No. 1000 were closed near the fire area.

The Loch Katrine fire was first detected Sept. 2 in high alpine territory, but was contained to 4 acres until easterly winds flared up over the weekend, U.S. Forest Service communications manager Christopher Bentley said.

"The combination of several weeks of unusually dry and hot weather, combined with that wind, just made that fire blow up," Bentley said. "It went from basically nothing to 2,000 acres overnight."

The 8 Road fire, 4 miles north of Elbe in Pierce County, was estimated at 150 acres as of Sunday afternoon, the state Department of Natural Resources said. Some locations on Scott Turner Road, Beaver Creek Road and 8 Road were under a level 1 evacuation notice, meaning residents should be prepared in case evacuation is necessary.

The state Department of Transportation closed a portion of Highway 2 near Skykomish multiple times on Sunday, so fire crews could assess and remove hazardous trees and use helicopters to “attack hot spots in the area.”

The Bolt Creek fire burning in the area was 41% contained as of Sunday afternoon, according to the incident command team.

The smoke lingering over Western Washington is unusual for this time of year, University of Washington atmospheric chemistry professor Dan Jaffe said.

“We’ve had a very warm summer, and it’s extended into October,” he said. “Normally we’d be getting rain at this time of year, and that would put out fires, but there’s a whole series of fires burning in the Cascades.”

When air quality is unhealthy, short periods outside are OK, Jaffe said, but long-term exposure leads to health risks such as shortness of breath and headaches.

Jaffe recommends residents monitor air quality maps and filter the air in their homes using air purifiers or filtration systems — staying indoors won’t help you if the air quality in your house isn’t good. “Smoke gets into your house and if you don’t do something about it, you’re going to be breathing in smoke,” he said.

Sunday night and into Monday morning, an onshore flow was expected to bring in a marine layer with “relatively cooler, moister air coming from over the Pacific,” National Weather Service meteorologist Dev McMillian said. While Eastern Washington will see more smoke, the cooler, wetter air is expected to decrease the coverage of smoke and McMillian said possibly improve air quality west of the Cascades.

Nonetheless, Monday temperatures are forecast to be above average, in the upper 60s. The region has received less than 10% of normal rainfall since July 4, according to the Weather Service.

The remainder of the week is expected to be dry and warmer than average — with daytime highs around 70 — until a storm front expected to arrive Friday night.

“The warmest temperatures are now behind us,” Michalski said. “Friday is our best chance for rain, and we should see a turn to more fall-like weather at the end of the week.”

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HEADLINE	10/16 Spokane, WSDOT face-off over Camp Hope
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/spokanes-camp-hope-and-nearby-residents-weigh-in-as-state-city-fight-continues/
GIST	<p>Sometimes Kristen Gerloff handles the drive-thru at the Jack in the Box on Sprague Avenue, where she’s worked since May. Other times she mans the grill or the fryer at the east Spokane fast food joint.</p> <p>“It’s a lot of fun,” she said. “It’s fast-paced.”</p> <p>Nearby, Gerloff has lived since the spring in a tent at Camp Hope, the 450-person encampment on state property along Ray Street, 100 feet north of Interstate 90.</p> <p>She doesn’t plan to be at Camp Hope much longer.</p> <p>“I just got approved for an apartment,” she said. “I’ve come a long way since I’ve been here.”</p> <p>While Gerloff has been trying to find a place to live, Camp Hope’s residents have found themselves in the middle of a standoff between Spokane leaders and officials with state government, which owns the land.</p>

Mayor Nadine Woodward and Spokane County officials want Camp Hope gone by mid-November. The city is threatening to sue the Washington State Department of Transportation, which owns the land, over the tent city, and the county is already working on a lawsuit. Woodward has said Camp Hope must go not only because it's hurting the East Central neighborhood, but because it grows increasingly unsafe for its own residents as winter draws near.

The state, which has committed \$21 million to housing the people living at Camp Hope, says disbanding the camp now would be counterproductive, given the ongoing effort to resettle its residents. State officials have chided Woodward for her handling of the situation and accused her of caring more about "optics than action."

"The City's approach and artificial deadlines will not benefit the people living within or outside of the encampment," Secretary of Transportation Roger Millar wrote Friday in a letter to Spokane police Chief Craig Meidl.

While government officials have traded barbs, Camp Hope has received attention at the state and national level.

"It is devastating the entire neighborhood," Spokane County Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich said on "Fox and Friends" last month.

"You have entire families living in fear because of the drugs, the alcohol, the theft, the violence inside the camp."

Knezovich and Meidl have vowed to clear Camp Hope, and said they'll arrest people who refuse to leave.

Campers have heard Knezovich's comments. They said they know many residents have accused them of ruining the neighborhood.

"I'm not stupid; I know what they're saying — we're all a bunch of druggies, heathens, criminals," Chris Senn said. "It's not true."

Many East Central residents said they also aren't happy with the bitter back and forth over Camp Hope.

Randy McGlenn, chair of the East Central Neighborhood Council, said crime has risen dramatically since Camp Hope formed in December, and residents feel unsafe walking around the neighborhood.

According to the Spokane Police Department, calls for service in the quarter-mile radius around Camp Hope are up 56% compared with 2021 and burglary calls are up 514%.

But McGlenn said lobbying "nasty" letters and making demands isn't helping. Government officials have to put aside their differences and address the root causes of homelessness, he said.

"Just scattering the camp and moving these people along isn't solving anything," McGlenn said. "They're still going to be homeless. They're still going to have the same issues they had that got them here."

Homeless advocates, meanwhile, said they're worried that anti-homeless sentiment is growing.

Maurice Smith, who works for Jewels Helping Hands as the camp's security official, said it feels like some politicians are more interested in "waging a war" against homeless people than helping them. Jewels is the primary service provider to camp residents.

"Leadership sets the tone, and the tone that's being set is, these are a bunch of drug-addicted criminals and they just need to be swept and taken to a shelter or jail," Smith said. "It shouldn't be that way."

How Camp Hope happened

Camp Hope started in December, when homeless people pitched tents outside Spokane City Hall to protest the city's lack of shelter space.

After the city said it would remove the tents, the protesters moved to the vacant Department of Transportation property along the freeway. The department initially planned to break up the camp, but opted against it because the city didn't have enough shelter beds available.

Over the following months, Camp Hope grew. In June, government officials started making tangible steps toward addressing the situation.

The Department of Commerce offered Spokane \$25 million to house Camp Hope residents. The state Legislature had set aside \$143 million in 2022 for housing people living on state-owned rights of way. The money has to be spent on projects that provide "safer housing opportunities" and emphasize "permanent housing solutions."

Spokane had mere weeks to put together a proposal for the dollars. To date, the Department of Commerce has committed \$21 million to the Woodward administration's plan.

More than \$13 million is going toward a Catholic Charities project that entails buying, remodeling and operating a former Quality Inn on Sunset Boulevard to house more than 100 people. Spokane will get \$4 million to pay for the operation of a new homeless shelter on Trent Avenue. Another \$3.5 million is set aside for the Empire Health Foundation and other homeless service providers.

Spokane and the state are still collaborating on the Woodward administration's plan, but their relationship became acrimonious in early September.

The shift came after Woodward threatened to sue the state over Camp Hope and demanded that it be cleared by mid-October. The mayor and sheriff have since pushed that deadline back by a month.

The threat came just two days after the city had opened the Trent Resource and Assistance Center, a former warehouse.

Before opening that facility, the city couldn't have argued it had shelter space available for all of Camp Hope's residents. Governments can't legally remove homeless people from public property unless they offer them a bed, so attempting to disperse the campers could have exposed the city to lawsuits.

The Woodward administration says it can fit 400 people into the Trent shelter, and that it could find beds for all of Camp Hope's residents. The Department of Transportation has disputed whether the city could house 400 people in the Trent shelter.

The state on Sept. 20 delivered a scathing response to Woodward's letter, signed by Millar, State Patrol Chief John Batiste and Department of Commerce Secretary Lisa Brown. The state officials said Woodward was trying to shift blame for Camp Hope and setting up the campers for failure by moving them before housing was available.

It was an unusually harsh rebuke for an official government communication, and two days later Knezovich escalated the fight even further. He said he'd clear out Camp Hope on his own.

In the three weeks since Knezovich's announcement, the county and Meidl have continued to threaten the Department of Transportation with legal action, citing nuisance law violations.

Nuisance laws are often used to prevent property owners from accumulating trash or using their land as a base for chronic criminal activity. With a judge's approval, governments can abate the nuisance without the property owner's permission and make the owner pay for the removal.

The Department of Transportation on Friday shot back at Meidl with an eight-page letter that questions the constitutionality of the city's plans and threatens legal action against Spokane if the city doesn't rescind its "chronic nuisance" notice.

'Difficult to feel positive'

East Central residents say they feel for the people at Camp Hope.

"I don't want to paint them all as criminals," Moises Gourneau said. "People are people."

But Gourneau said it's hard to remain empathetic when people steal from you. In recent months, his family had its lawnmower and leaf blower stolen, and its car windows smashed. He said his family had to call the police when a homeless man broke into their house and wouldn't leave.

"I'll still have sympathy because my family went through drug problems," Gourneau said. "At the same time, I definitely wouldn't have my little sisters playing out here by themselves."

Lina Krivopustov said she doesn't feel safe going for walks by herself. Jeff Jones said it's unsettling to have people walking through the neighborhood at night, rummaging through trash cans.

"I feel sorry for them and all that," Jones said, adding that "the ones I've come into contact with don't seem to want anything more than something for nothing."

Ken Craudell, general manager of Double Eagle Pawn, said Camp Hope has had a negative impact on his store.

"Every day we catch, conservatively, three people trying to come in here and steal something," Craudell said. "I ran a guy out of here earlier today because he came in here with a pair of snips and was going over to the bikes. He was going to cut one of the security tags off a bike and try to wheel it out the door."

McGlenn said East Central residents understand that people at Camp Hope are struggling, but they're also growing tired of rampant crime.

"It is difficult to feel positive when people don't feel safe," he said. "I think that's really what's feeding a lot of the animosity today, is people just want the issue to be dealt with."

Spokane Homeless Coalition Administrator Barry Barfield said it's undeniable that Camp Hope has caused an uptick in crime, but people need to put the situation in context.

"Even if you took the 600 wealthiest, most well-intended Spokaneites and put them on ground with tents, and surround them with police cars, and give them no income and services, and porta-potties, and drinking out of a hose, I bet those 600 wonderful citizens of our community just might cause an uptick in crime," Barfield said.

People living in Camp Hope say they know the encampment has led to a rise in theft, but they said they believe a minority of the residents are responsible.

"Just because you've got one bad apple in the box doesn't mean the whole box is bad," Mark Young said.

Lewis Harrington, an Army veteran who lives out of his broken down 1990 Chevrolet van, agreed.

"There's good, honest people here that are really struggling and trying," Harrington said.

Senn, who spent 15 years in the Army, said many Camp Hope residents simply suffer from mental illness or had bad luck. He used himself as an example of the latter.

Before he came to Camp Hope in May, Senn was a house painter. He lost his job and couldn't afford rent.

“Woke up one morning, car wouldn’t start,” he said. “The company I worked for, you had to have a running vehicle to work for them.”

Senn has two jobs, one as a part of Jewels Helping Hands’ security team and another at Conoco.

Barfield said it’s important to remember Camp Hope’s residents are some of the most disadvantaged members of the community.

“These folks have been beaten down, hurt, victims of adverse childhood experiences. They were raised by drug-addicted parents, they were in and out of the foster system, they have lost jobs, it goes on and on,” he said.

“If you dig into their story, 90% of the time your heart goes out to them and you say, ‘Oh my God, I want to help you.’ “

Smith said it’s frustrating that the narrative around Camp Hope has become so negative.

He pointed out that the camp’s population has fallen from more than 600 to 443 as more people move into housing, and said an effort by the Department of Licensing to get people state identification documents is a major sign of progress.

Spokane will be remembered for how it responds to Camp Hope, Smith said.

“What do we believe in?” Smith asked. “Do we believe that rescuing a life — and we’ve got 443 lives here — and bringing them out of the situation that they’re in is a worthwhile endeavor? Are we willing to pay the price for doing it? What kind of community do we want to be?”

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HEADLINE	10/16 South Pierce Co. wildfire continues to grow
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/8-road-fire-continues-grow-south-pierce-county/NPZXBX7Z65GKFMFCANDS5R36SQ/
GIST	<p>Eatonville, WA. – Crews with multiple agencies have been battling the 8 Road Fire over the weekend.</p> <p>The Washington State Department of Natural Resources says that 150 acres have burned as of Sunday. A spokesperson with the agency says air and ground crews have attacked the fire throughout the day, and ground crews will continue work throughout the night.</p> <p>According to Pierce County Fire and Rescue 23, a level one, or “be ready,” evacuation notice has been issued for people living at certain locations of Scott Turner Road, Beaver Creek, and 8 Road.</p> <p>KIRO 7 spoke with one woman about the current status of the fire. Catherine Christian says it was concerning Sunday morning and afternoon due to the strong winds and smoke filling the air. She also shared photos of the fire impacting parts of Dobbs Mountain.</p> <p>Christian says that where she and her family live, they are under a level one evacuation notice. She says they are prepared to leave if the fire continues to grow, but she says many people in the area with many animals are worried about how quickly they can evacuate.</p> <p>“That’s what’s super important for me and where it gets concerning. And the neighbors, too. Is that we need to have, if it’s possible, at least 24 hours. Because not everyone can fit all of their animals in one trailer. So, you’re lining up different people to help you out with their trailers too. And you’re making multiple trips and figure out who has space in their pastures or their coops or their pins to put these animals in the meantime,” Christian said.</p>

	<p>“There’s just a lot that goes into it compared to just you and your family leaving, you know,” Christian said.</p> <p>Both Graham Fire and Pierce County Fire and Rescue 23 had crews on the ground Sunday. Currently, Washington DNR Wildfire is leading the response.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 East Clark Co. wildfire breaks containment
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/nakia-creek-fire-near-vancouver-breaks-containment-evacuations-ordered
GIST	<p>CLARK COUNTY, Wash. - The Nakia Creek Fire burning east of Vancouver has broken containment lines, and residents living within 3.5 miles are being told to evacuate their homes immediately.</p> <p>Fed by gusty winds and low humidity, the growth of the fire prompted authorities to order evacuations as the blaze sent up a plume of white smoke visible throughout the Portland metropolitan area.</p> <p>Dubbed the Nakia Creek Fire, the fire in eastern Clark County was burning in rugged terrain of brush and timber and had charred an estimated 2,000 acres by Sunday afternoon, said Ryan Rodruck, a spokesman for the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.</p> <p>Residents of an estimated 1,000 homes were under evacuation orders, Rodruck said. The state issued a mobilization order allowing any firefighting agency to dispatch resources to the blaze, he said.</p> <p>The Clark Emergency Services Agency expanded evacuation zones into the rural outskirts of the cities of Camas and Washougal, The Columbian reported.</p> <p>"Please understand that this is a very dynamic situation and if you are anywhere near this area, you should take precautions to evacuate," the emergency services agency said in a statement.</p> <p>Crews had secured a perimeter containing 20% of the fire burning in the Larch Block of the Yacolt Burn State Forest. The National Weather Service had posted a red flag warning for wind and low humidity in the region, including the south Washington Cascades, with wind gusts up to 30 miles per hour for Sunday.</p> <p>A shelter for evacuees was opened at a church in Camas.</p> <p>About 100 personnel, supported by water-dropping helicopters, were battling the fire, which began Oct. 9.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Russia sends barely trained men to war
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/16/world/europe/russia-draft-ukraine.html
GIST	<p>A half-dozen Russian soldiers talk about being shipped to an area of intense fighting in eastern Ukraine just 11 days after their mobilization. Asked about his shooting practice, a bearded conscript says, “Once. Three magazines.”</p> <p>In a town near Yekaterinburg, in central Russia, newly mobilized men march in place in their street clothes. “No machine guns, nothing, no clothes, no shoes,” says an unidentified observer. “Half of them are hungover, old, at risk — the ambulance should be on duty.”</p> <p>Elsewhere, scores of relatives of freshly drafted Russian soldiers crowd outside a training center, passing items through its fence to the recruits — boots, berets, bulletproof vests, backpacks, sleeping bags, camping mats, medicine, bandages and food.</p> <p>“This is not how it’s done,” a woman named Elena told the news outlet Samara Online. “We buy everything.”</p>

Despite draconian laws against criticizing the “special military operation” in Ukraine, Russian social media is awash with scenes like those above captured in widely circulating videos. Such posts are taking the Ministry of Defense to task for acting just as Western military experts predicted: rushing thousands of newly drafted, untrained, ill-equipped soldiers to Ukraine, too desperate to plug holes in its defensive lines to mold the men into cohesive units.

“They are giving them at best basics and at worst nothing and throwing them into combat, which suggests that these guys are just literally cannon fodder,” said William Alberque, a specialist in the Russian armed forces and the director of the arms control program at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, a research organization based in London.

An extreme sign of disorder came on Saturday, when two men from a former Soviet state opened fire at a Russian training camp. They killed 11 volunteers and wounded 15 before being shot dead, Russian outlets reported.

Russia’s military is struggling to balance two objectives, military analysts said: deploying enough troops to halt recent Ukrainian advances while rebuilding ground forces decimated during eight months of war.

Inevitably, some draftees have already been killed or captured, stirring ever harsher criticism of the mobilization effort announced on Sept. 21 and considered a shambles from the start.

In theory, the draft was of men in the reserves with military skills that needed refreshing, but in practice it pulled in virtually anybody, critics said.

“The result of the mobilization is that untrained guys are thrown onto the front line,” Anastasia Kashevarova, a military blogger who has supported the war, [wrote in an angry post](#), one of several such broadsides.

“Chelyabinsk, Yekaterinburg, Moscow — zinc coffins are already coming,” she added. “You told us that there would be training, that they would not be sent to the front line in a week. Were you lying again?”

Thus far, the Kremlin has tolerated criticism of the conduct of the war, while jailing or fining those who questioned any need for the invasion. But there were rumblings this past week that it should crack down on military critics, too.

On Friday, President Vladimir V. Putin confirmed at a news conference that 16,000 recruits had already been deployed to combat units, some with as few as five to 10 days of training. The recruits were sorely needed, given that the front in Ukraine stretched for nearly 700 miles, he said, adding that the training would continue there.

Evidence of the lack of training is anecdotal, but the sheer number of videos from across Russia, along with scattered threats from draftees to strike over the conditions, other news reports and commentaries, underscores the depth of the problems.

In one widely circulated video, a recruit from Moscow assigned to the First Tank Regiment — a storied unit hit hard early in the invasion — said that the regimental commander had announced that there would be no shooting practice or even theoretical training before the men deployed.

Another video showed [a group of about 500 disheveled men](#), most of their faces covered by balaclavas, standing by a train in the Belgorod region, near the border with Ukraine. The narrator said that they had not been assigned to specific units, had lived in “inhuman conditions” for a week, had to buy their own food and lacked ammunition.

The Belgorod governorate announced that most of the men would be returned to central Russia for additional training. Even the governor of the neighboring Kursk region, Roman Starovoit, decried the

training conditions. He described ruined canteen buildings, rusty or broken showers and a lack of beds and uniforms. “In some places it’s OK, and in some places it is just awful,” he said on social media.

On Thursday, another governorate, Chelyabinsk, was among the first to officially announce the deaths of untrained soldiers, with five killed in eastern Ukraine. The announcement did not detail the circumstances, but the BBC’s Russian service quoted friends and relatives of the men as saying they were deployed “like meat” without combat training.

Similarly, the 28-year-old head of a department in Moscow’s city government, Aleksei Martynov, who lacked combat experience, [was killed in Ukraine](#) just days after being mobilized, Natalya Loseva, a journalist with the state-run RT television channel, reported on Telegram. Her report could not be independently confirmed.

“The Russian military leadership is continuing to compromise the future reconstitution of the force by prioritizing the immediate mobilization of as many bodies as possible for ongoing fighting in Ukraine,” the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War said in a recent assessment. A report from Britain’s Ministry of Defense seconded that evaluation, stating, “The failure of Russian crews to destroy intact equipment before withdrawing or surrendering highlights their poor state of training and low levels of battle discipline.”

Not surprisingly, Russian officials are seeking to put a positive spin on the call-up. Russia’s defense minister, Sergei K. Shoigu, announced that 200,000 recruits were preparing at some 80 training grounds and six educational centers. Mr. Putin called a halt to the unpopular mobilization, saying 220,000 conscripts would be enough, rather than the initially announced target of 300,000.

The number of Russian troops in Ukraine remains murky. An estimated 200,000 soldiers were deployed for the invasion, but Western intelligence agencies say that anywhere from a third to one half have been killed or wounded.

The Defense Ministry has pumped out a stream of videos showing happy “mobiks,” as the recruits are known in Russian slang, learning to shoot, attack tanks, tie a tourniquet, plant a land mine and other military tasks.

“In general, the personnel are fully equipped, ready for combat operations and eager to join the ranks of combat units and to destroy the enemy,” said a soldier identified only by his first name, Magomed, in [a Ministry of Defense video](#) shot at a training ground somewhere in or near eastern Ukraine.

An injection of hundreds of thousands of draftees might stop Ukrainian advances in the short term, but military analysts said Russia would struggle to reverse its fortunes in the months ahead. “The Russians will have to make a choice — build a unit properly over time and then risk losing the war, or using that unit now because the war demands it, but the unit will be half ready,” said Johan Norberg, a Russia analyst at the Swedish Defense Research Agency.

Russia’s lines in eastern Ukraine have collapsed repeatedly under the onslaught of better trained, better motivated soldiers. Analysts say the Russian military has a glaring lack of cohesive units where infantry, artillery and air power are trained to work together.

Andrei Gurulev, a hard-line deputy in the federal Parliament and a senior officer in the reserves, wrote on Telegram that it would take at least one or two months before Russia could deploy trained units. Others suggested it would take until the winter. Some Russian military cadets are being released early to become officers, the Ukrainian general staff reported.

The Soviet Union maintained a permanent military training infrastructure, which was dismantled after its collapse in 1991. With the start of the war, military trainers were shipped to Ukraine, leaving units struggling to fill the gap with veterans or teachers from military academies.

	<p>“They have lost a lot of military specialists,” said Gleb Irisov, a Russian Air Force veteran and former analyst for the state-run news agency TASS. “There is nobody to train these new people.”</p> <p>Even before the war, Mr. Irisov and others noted, Russia struggled to train its two classes of about 100,000 conscripts every spring and fall, with reports of problems like ill-fed troops.</p> <p>“The system of military training is very weak and has been that way for a long time,” Mr. Irisov said. Much of the training appeared only on paper, he said. “They could not manage to do this in peacetime, so in wartime it is even more difficult.”</p> <p>Unexpectedly, some of the most concentrated training is happening in the Donbas, the area of eastern Ukraine that has been inflamed by war since Russia ignited a separatist movement there in 2014.</p> <p>Last spring, men in the Donbas were being snatched off the streets and dispatched directly to the front lines. But amid the carnage, attitudes shifted, said Kirill Mikhailov, a researcher at the Conflict Intelligence Team, an organization founded in Russia to track conflicts involving Russian troops. Officials in the region realized that they had “squandered their manpower for little gain,” he said, and so they knew they would need to make better soldiers out of the Russian recruits.</p> <p>For the moment, however, with thousands of recruits pouring into Ukraine, it appears that the Kremlin is emphasizing quantity over quality. Or, as Mr. Norberg put it, citing a Russian expression, “Not with skill, but with numbers.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/14 Recall: Abbott infant formula
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/abbott-launches-infant-formula-recall-plant-faulty-bottle/story?id=91518369
GIST	<p>In a new recall following a separate one which dogged them for the better part of this year, Abbott, which has been the largest infant formula manufacturer in the U.S., is now voluntarily recalling bottles of their largest, most popular kind of formula, Similac, from their manufacturing facility in Columbus, Ohio.</p> <p>This recall is not for the bacterial contamination concerns which prompted the massive voluntary recall at their plant in Sturgis, Michigan, earlier this year.</p> <p>The new recall in Ohio is because the bottle caps on some of their 2-ounce ready-to-feed liquid products made at the Columbus plant are faulty, and may not have sealed completely, the company said in a recall notice.</p> <p>If formula bottles aren't sealed properly, it could result in spoilage, Abbott said. Babies could develop painful gastrointestinal symptoms like diarrhea and vomiting if they consume spoiled products, according to the company.</p> <p>Abbott underscores that only a "small percentage, less than 1%" of bottles in these recalled lots have faulty caps, according to a statement. The company says they "internally identified the issue and are addressing it."</p> <p>While this is yet another setback for Abbott, industry experts say it is an important part of the oversight system: for companies to rigorously self-monitor their safety and quality control processes and catch problems before they get worse.</p> <p>Abbott declined to provide an exact number of bottles being recalled now, but said in the statement it "equates to less than one day's worth of the total number of ounces of infant formula fed in the U.S. and is not expected to impact the overall U.S. infant formula supply."</p> <p>Even so -- that still means this recall could temporarily keep millions of bottles off the shelves, in a market still recouping from the months' long formula crisis this spring.</p>

Between 2 and 3 million babies in the U.S. rely to some degree on formula every day, experts have told ABC. On average, infants drink between four and six 8-ounce bottles' worth of formula a day. That includes unfinished or spilt bottles, and naturally fluctuating appetites from day to day. Multiplied out -- that means American babies need somewhere between 10 and 12 million bottles per day.

The recall from the Columbus facility impacts smaller, 2-ounce bottles, of which more are required for a day's worth of feeding.

Abbott is still continuing production of these popular Similac products on a different production line at the facility, the company said.

Abbott's formula industry dominance made their abrupt absence this spring a strain on the U.S. market. When their Sturgis production [was shut down](#) amid Cronobacter contamination concerns, it [sent the U.S. formula market into a tailspin](#).

Amid the dire shortage, Abbott ramped up production at their Columbus facility in an attempt to mitigate some of the shortage.

Abbott converted manufacturing lines at their Columbus plant to increase production of Similac and Alimentum liquid ready-to-feed formula -- something the company repeatedly touted to the public and in congressional testimony.

Abbott says the products included in the Columbus plant recall were distributed "primarily to hospitals and to some doctors' offices, distributors and retailers in the U.S., including Puerto Rico; one lot of products was sent to Barbados, Bermuda, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Croix and St. Thomas; and two lots were sent to Canada, Curacao, Panama, and Trinidad and Tobago."

Similac 360 Total Care is one of the brands of infant formula included in a recall. Less than 1% of recalled bottles have caps that may not have sealed.

The company advises parents to check whether formula they have was recalled at [similacrecall.com](#), and if it is, not to use it.

Abbott says their recall includes the brands Similac® Pro-Total Comfort™, Similac® 360 Total Care®, Similac 360 Total Care Sensitive, Similac® Special Care® 24, Similac Stage 1, Similac® NeoSure®, Similac Water (Sterilized) and Pedialyte Electrolyte Solution manufactured at their Columbus facility.

Abbott says this recall does not impact any of their other formula products. They say they will continue to produce Similac formula products "in alternative product sizes and formats for delivery to retail locations, in addition to increased production throughout our global manufacturing network."

"We take our responsibility to deliver high-quality products very seriously," Joe Manning, executive vice president of nutritional products at Abbott said in a statement. "We internally identified the issue, are addressing it, and will work with our customers to minimize inconvenience and get them the products they need."

A Food and Drug Administration spokesperson tells ABC News the agency is "aware" of Abbott's new recall of Similac products from their Ohio plant, and say they "don't expect" it to impact overall domestic supply.

The agency spokesperson pointed to how FDA has relaxed their import discretion, allowing foreign formula makers to sell their products on the U.S. market, as the reason they think this latest recall from Abbott shouldn't have the same kind of drastic impact which the massive one from earlier this year.

	"Parents and caregivers have many additional formula options today thanks to FDA's efforts and those of many of our government partners," FDA's spokesperson said, adding they are "more than doubling the number of formula manufacturers" making formula for U.S. infants.
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HEADLINE	10/17 Explosions rock Ukraine capital
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ukraine-explosions-rock-kyiv-week-russian-strikes-91608136
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine -- Several loud explosions rocked the center of the Ukrainian capital Monday, a week after Russia orchestrated a massive, coordinated air strike across the country.</p> <p>Kyiv city mayor Vitaliy Klichko said the central Shevchenko district of the capital had been hit, and urged residents to take shelter. No further details were immediately known.</p> <p>The explosions came from the same central Kyiv district where a week ago a missile struck a children's playground and intersection near the Kyiv National University's main buildings.</p> <p>Social media posts showed a fire in the area of the apparently strike, with black smoke rising into the early morning light.</p> <p>Russian forces struck Kyiv with Iranian Shahed drones, wrote Andrii Yermak, the head of the Ukrainian president's office, in a post on the Telegram social media site. Russia has repeatedly been using the so-called suicide drones in recent weeks to target urban centers and infrastructure, including power stations.</p> <p>The strike on Kyiv comes as fighting has intensified in the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk in recent days, as well as the continued Ukrainian counteroffensive in the south near Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said last night in his evening address that there was heavy fighting around the cities of Bakhmut and Soledar in the Donetsk region. The Donetsk and Luhansk regions make up the bulk of the industrial east known as the Donbas, and were two of four regions annexed by Russia in September in defiance of international law.</p> <p>On Sunday, the Russian-backed regime in the Donetsk region said Ukraine had shelled its central administrative building in a direct hit. No casualties were reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Defunding police? Funding rises 83% cities
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/defunding-claims-police-funding-increased-us-cities/story?id=91511971
GIST	<p>In Los Angeles, the county sheriff says local residents are in danger because "defunding has consequences" -- even though his agency's budget is up more than \$250 million since 2019.</p> <p>Sheriff Alex Villanueva is not alone in suggesting to voters that crime is up because Democrats defunded police agencies after nationwide protests following the 2020 murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer.</p> <p>Politicians, pundits and police leaders across the country are repeating the accusation as they address concerns about crime heading toward Election Day.</p> <p>Yet in many communities, defunding never happened.</p> <p>ABC Owned Television Stations examined the budgets of more than 100 cities and counties and found that 83% are spending at least 2% more on police in 2022 than in 2019.</p> <p>Of the 109 budgets analyzed, only eight agencies cut police funds by more than 2%, while 91 agencies increased law enforcement funding by at least 2%.</p> <p>In 49 cities or counties, police funding has increased by more than 10%.</p>

An 'outbreak of crime'

Despite what the public record shows, an analysis of broadcast transcripts shows that candidates, law enforcement leaders and television hosts discussed the impact of "defunding the police" more than 10,000 times over the last two years, according to the Internet Archive's TV news transcripts dating back to June 2020 -- and the mentions aren't subsiding during this campaign season.

"In communities across the country, like in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Chicago, so many other places, it is this remarkable, incredible, outbreak of crime," Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said in a video posted on Twitter in August by the Republican Governors Association.

"You typically see where these crimes are taking place, there has been a de-emphasis of the role that law enforcement plays. It could be defunding law enforcement. It could be a reduction in law enforcement," Abbott said.

Dr. Rashawn Ray, a sociologist and senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, told KABC in Los Angeles that this false narrative has persisted due to repetition by public officials.

"Overwhelmingly, cities, counties, police departments across the country are not being defunded in any way," Ray said. "In fact, many of them have increased their budgets. Part of the reason why the 'defund the police' narrative has stayed around is because police officers say it and elected officials say it."

ABC's analysis of police budget data shows police spending has increased in some of the very cities frequently cited by conservative politicians and pundits as places where Democrats' defunding has fueled violent crime waves.

The Los Angeles Police Department's budget is up by 9.4% since 2019. San Francisco's police budget is up by 4% and Philadelphia's is up by 3%.

In Chicago, police spending is up 15%, representing almost a quarter billion dollars in new police spending since 2019.

In Houston, where the homicide rate nearly doubled in both 2020 and 2021 before starting to subside this year, local government officials have increased police spending by nearly 9% -- almost \$80 million -- from 2019 to 2022.

President Joe Biden [heralded this movement](#) in his 2022 State of the Union address, saying, "The answer is not to defund the police. It's to fund the police. Fund them!" -- a line that drew bipartisan applause.

Perception versus reality

A few cities did try to reallocate police spending following concerns from advocacy groups in the wake of the George Floyd protests.

In Austin, Texas, leaders cut the police budget by about 30% in 2021, proposing to instead spend that money on programs like family violence prevention, mental health responders, and police oversight.

But that lasted only one year. The Texas legislature voted to bar cities in the state from decreasing police budgets, so Austin boosted police spending by 50% in 2022.

In Los Angeles County, where Sheriff Villanueva is engaged in a tight re-election battle, he's been outspoken for months about the impacts of what he describes as the defunding of his agency, claiming that his budget is being "cannibalized."

Yet records show his agency's budget is up about 8% percent -- more than \$259 million -- from 2019 to 2022.

"While the perception may be that defunding is taking place, in fact, the sheriff's budget has increased," County Supervisor Kathryn Barger said.

When asked by KABC about his defunding claims, Villanueva acknowledged that his budget is higher -- but not enough to cover rising costs. He said that if day-to-day costs grow faster than his budget, that is "direct defunding, of course."

Barger, in response, said that cost increases impact many county departments and are not unique to the sheriff's department.

"He plays as though he's being targeted," Barger said of Villanueva. "And he's not."

In fact, Los Angeles County's 2023 budget will increase the sheriff's department budget by another quarter of a billion dollars.

An 'impossible environment'

Some in law enforcement say that even more than budget cuts, what's really hurt police departments is anti-police rhetoric.

Following Floyd's murder in 2020, protesters in New York clashed with NYPD officers for days on end. Officers arrested hundreds of protesters each night, and the department says more than 300 officers were among those hurt.

Seeking accountability, some politicians called for \$1 billion to be cut from the NYPD's budget.

But the billion-dollar cut never happened. The NYPD's budget fell by just 2.8%, dropping from \$5.6 billion in 2019 to \$5.4 billion in 2022.

Nevertheless, Police Benevolent Association President Patrick Lynch said the defund movement hurt officer morale.

"More than any budget cut, the greatest damage from the 'Defund the Police' movement was done by its anti-police, anti-public safety message," Lynch told WABC in New York. "It has created an impossible environment on the streets, one where even the simplest interactions turn into a confrontation."

The result was a massive NYPD exodus. Retirements in 2020 skyrocketed 72% from the previous year, and this year the NYPD lost more employees through the month of August than it had during that same time period in any previous year.

"As more cops quit, the workload becomes more crushing for those who remain," Lynch said. "Public safety ultimately suffers."

Being 'all things to everybody'

Criminal justice experts say that even if the cuts were real, the premise that lower police spending leads to increased crime -- or vice versa -- is counter to decades of evidence, according to public data.

An ABC analysis of state and local police funding and overall violent crime data in the U.S. between 1985 and 2020 found no relationship between year-to-year police spending and crime rates. An analysis by the Washington Post found similar results from 1960 to 2018.

Further ABC analysis of Los Angeles County's own crime data shows that, over the last decade, violent crime numbers haven't moved up or down in relation to the amount of money spent on law enforcement or the number of officers on patrol.

Kimberly Dodson, a retired law enforcement officer who is now a criminologist at the University of Houston-Clear Lake, said that's because police largely respond to crime instead of deter it.

"Crime happens. Somebody calls the police, and they come and take a report. Then they try to solve the crime after the fact," Dodson told KTRK in Houston. "So saying that the police deter crime is not actually accurate, because they're more of a reactive agency."

Dodson said one reason police agencies feel stretched is because communities have been asking them to "be all things to everybody -- and that doesn't seem fair."

For example, said Dodson, police these days are asked to respond to problems caused by longstanding mental health issues, family conflicts, or issues related to entrenched poverty that's taken hold over decades.

"We always talked about, as police officers, we go out for 10 minutes and we fix something that's been wrong and put a Band-Aid on it, something that's been wrong for 10 years -- and it's just an impossible task," said the former officer.

Changing that would mean changing the way emergency calls get handled, says Ray.

The Brookings Institution senior fellow is researching ways to narrow the mission of police so they only handle crime and safety, allowing government resources to be reallocated so problems not requiring police intervention could be handled by others.

"Are there better ways by which to think about calls for service, whether that be with mental health responses, whether that be with different sort of traffic officers handling those particular issues?" he said.

Such an arrangement could provide police even more time to focus on solving crimes and protecting people.

"It could actually free them up," said Ray.

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HEADLINE	10/15 D.C. homeless camps grow to 120
SOURCE	https://nypost.com/2022/10/15/dc-tent-cities-stain-the-nations-capital/
GIST	<p>The marble monuments of the nation's capital have become neighbors to abject squalor — ever-expanding tent cities that are the most disgraceful examples of a trend bedeviling Democrat-led cities around the US.</p> <p>In the past two years, homeless encampments have exploded in Washington D.C., as both the city and federal governments lifted enforcement measures during the COVID-19 pandemic — and made it a no-brainer for itinerants to lay down roots by providing for their every need.</p> <p>A tour by The Post of the district's major tourist areas this week found at least 35 vagrants in residence at a National Park Service site two blocks from the White House; more than 20 in the green spaces surrounding the State Department complex; and five across the street from the infamous Watergate Hotel.</p> <p>And these sites accounted for less than 5 percent of the estimated 120 tent cities in Washington D.C.</p> <p>"It's wicked and it's medieval," said Robert Westover, 59, a longtime resident exasperated by the staggering surge. "We're really letting people suffer on the street like animals? Somehow that's progressive?"</p> <p>The decay and destitution on display shocks foreign tourists.</p> <p>"'The land of milk and honey' — it means that in America you don't lack anything," said Elvis Shu, 39, a first-time visitor from Cameroon. "I know people don't get hungry here, so I'm surprised indeed."</p>

Moti, 48, a vacationer from Israel, said, “We didn’t expect to see the homeless here near the White House.”

“I thought it was a rich city,” added his wife Orli, 54. “It’s a Democrat here in the White House, and the Democrats are more socialist, right?”

The number of those living rough in the district has grown sharply since President Biden’s inauguration, observed Daniel Kingery, who pitched his tent in historic McPherson Square over two years ago.

“Bleeding hearts have no brains, unfortunately,” Kingery said. “There’s so much [donated] food coming into this park, there’s not enough people to eat it. So they’ll give it to the birds or throw it away.”

THE LIVING IS EASY

Kingery lays down his head just a stone’s throw from the bedroom of the Leader of the Free World. His tent, and nearly three dozen others, have transformed the one-block-square green space — crowned by a grand equestrian statue of Union Civil War hero Gen. James B. McPherson — into a shantytown where residents’ generators hum and laundry flutters from fences and tree branches.

Do-gooders make it easy to stay put.

“All of these bleeding-heart organizations,” said Kingery, 61, “bring pretty much the same thing to the same park and it usually gets thrown away ... sleeping bags, ponchos, and once in a while I would throw away brand new blankets.”

Originally from Gilbert, Iowa, Kingery shook his head as he sat beneath a beach umbrella, surrounded by a pile of possessions: a sleeping bag, a bright red shopping cart, and an old ship’s bell mounted on a wooden post.

“You would find very few people who come to live in this park who are hungry or malnourished,” he said.

William Everett Randolph, 66, who has lived at McPherson off and on for five years after moving from Philadelphia, agreed.

“You got people giving out breakfast, giving out juice, giving out socks, giving out all types of stuff they need, a toothbrush, toothpaste,” he said.

But it’s not freebies that keep him in an underpass encampment at 3rd St. and Virginia Ave. SE, said David Graves, 44, who came to Washington from New York three years ago.

“I moved here and met these brothers and we formed this society or community or whatever,” Graves said. “We became a family, understanding, you know, it could be dangerous if we don’t stick together and work together.”

As the tent cities have grown, so too have the dangers.

“The people that are accumulating here tend to be a little more violent and a little more openly hostile to the tourists,” Kingery said.

Many are drug-addicted or mentally ill.

“The hospitals in which they should be housed don’t have the insurance money to keep them in there,” Kingery charged. “So they just turn them loose.”

“We look out for each other. We have to,” Randolph said. “I have that mister over there, he watches my tent, and I watch his tent, and he watches her tent and you know why? Because people break into your tent and they take anything. They figure it’s worth a dollar to get a hit [of drugs] with.”

SETTING DOWN STAKES — AND NEVER LEAVING

Homelessness has always been a concern in Washington D.C., whose median monthly rent of \$1,976 [puts it at No. 8](#) — just behind New York City — on the list of most expensive metro areas in the nation, according to Stessa.com.

The left-leaning city government, run entirely by Democrats, has purportedly made fighting homelessness a top priority.

Mayor Muriel Bowser has spent at least \$100 million a year on her vaunted Homeward DC plan since introducing it in 2016. In April, Bowser reported that 4,410 people [had been counted](#) living on the street or in a shelter — the lowest number in 17 years, she boasted.

Yet at the same time, the number of tent cities exploded. The district tallied 130 encampments in November 2021 — a 40% increase since the start of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.

That's when the Centers for Disease Control [issued a guidance document](#) telling cities that homeless encampments should be allowed to “remain where they are” for the duration of the outbreak.

“Clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and ... increases the potential for infectious disease spread,” the CDC explained.

Ever since, the camps have festered like a gangrenous wound — and the city and the National Park Service, which owns 22% of the district's entire acreage, have repeatedly pointed to the CDC guidance for leaving them in place, even in the face of neighborhood complaints and declining COVID cases.

Only a few tent cities, including a notorious encampment on the lawn in front of historic Union Station three blocks from the Capitol, have been closed down.

The camps are scattered throughout the district — both on the federal land, where unauthorized camping is technically prohibited, and in city parks, roadway underpasses, and empty lots, where it is allowed on all but private property.

During a visit this week, The Post planned to stop by five encampments within walking distance of world-famous landmarks like the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument, and the U.S. Capitol — but stumbled across three more tent cities along the way.

At least nine vagrants have created pieced-together living spaces beneath the underpass of a bridge at 2nd St. and Virginia Ave. SE, eight blocks from the US Capitol. Books, lamps, plastic shelves, chairs, and clothing were scattered at the site within view of students from nearby Capitol Hill Day School as they took recess at Garfield Park.

One block away, another underpass settlement at 3rd St. and Virginia Ave. SE sported a power-washed gravel floor and a set of five matching tents — a gift from Remora House, a homeless advocacy group, said Graves.

And the city has enabled the camps' expansion.

In May 2020, the district installed 60 bright yellow port-a-potties near some of the most long-established encampments — like the Foggy Bottom site near the State Department, in use since at least 2018 — to accommodate the tent dwellers.

Two and a half years later, the shacks still stud the city's streets, each costing \$1,500 a week to maintain and stock.

SHOCK AND GAWK

Visitors to Washington, one of the nation's top tourist attractions, are stunned by the scenes of destitution they see around every corner.

"I'm just in shock," said Devin McCants, 28, a tourist from Atlanta. "There are tents everywhere here ... it's crazy."

Jersey City, NJ resident Rachel Greene, 28, was sympathetic — to a point.

"These people, they got nowhere to go," she said. "But it's kind of like, 'Damn, you gotta be homeless right here? You couldn't be homeless like two miles that way where I don't have to see you and kids don't have to see you?'"

Workers at restaurants and other businesses near the camps say they have become a dangerous burden.

"We have homeless people on drugs come in here all the time," said Hailey Yokley, 17, a manager at a Joe & The Juice coffee shop in McPherson Square. "They come in screaming and it scares people."

Shane Carnahan, 32, a bartender at the nearby Georgia Brown's restaurant, has called police multiple times to deal with troublesome tent-city residents.

"They'll come over here and make a little scene," he said. "Sometimes they come in crazy and shaking their ass and we have to call the cops."

Many Washingtonians have had enough.

"It makes you sick," said a Capitol Hill staffer. "The Democrats have let this city be completely overrun. Nowadays, I'm almost embarrassed to take my friends to the White House when they visit D.C."

"We're just disgusted by it," Westover said. "I mean, the richest location on earth and we can't seem to handle a homeless situation, really?"

Robert Lawrence, 59, who works for the US Department of Veterans Affairs across the street from McPherson Square, said the administration simply "does not have a program that works."

"It bugs me when I find out there's a veteran over there," he added. "These guys, they do their service for our country and then they get left in the cold. ... [the government] sends too much money overseas instead of helping out their own."

RED AND BLUE ISSUE

Mayor Bowser's office defended the city's encampment tolerance policy.

"The district continuously engages with individuals experiencing homelessness to connect them with the resources and services available to meet their needs," said a spokesperson from the city's Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services.

But Republicans in Congress are aghast.

"Democrat-run cities are being driven into the ground and Washington, DC is no different," said Rep. Nicole Malliotakis (R-SI/Bkln). "Our nation's capital is one of our main tourist attractions and it's become embarrassing ... but no one from the Mayor to the President seems to care."

Rep. Louie Gohmert (R-Tex.) who sits on the congressional committee that oversees the National Park Service, vowed that change is on the horizon — provided the GOP takes control of Congress in November's midterm elections.

	<p>“It goes a bit back to Rudy Giuliani’s ‘no broken widows’ — you enforce the law,” Gohmert said. “We are not going to let them keep ruining everybody’s enjoyment of our park system just because they refuse to enforce the law.</p> <p>“This beautiful park that was designed for people’s enjoyment, and you can take it over and just turn it to excrement,” he added. “They’re turning Washington into another San Francisco. The Democrat thinking is we just let people degenerate.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/15 Holidays air travel most expensive in 5yrs
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/business/consumer/airline-tickets-cheap-or-expensive-holiday-season-2022-rcna52261
GIST	<p>Thinking of flying for the holidays this year? Expect to pay more for airfare than at any other time in recent years.</p> <p>Thanksgiving airfare prices are currently averaging \$281 round trip, up 25% from last year, according to travel booking group Hopper. For Christmas travel, airfare prices are averaging \$435 round trip, up 55% from last year and 19% higher than in 2019.</p> <p>Those are the highest levels in at least five years, according to the website.</p> <p>What's the cause? It's not just inflation, even though that's been at a 40-year high for most of 2022, and has pushed the price of goods and services up across the board. Look to the airlines. While carriers have rebuilt much of their passenger capacity as the Covid-19 pandemic ebbs, they still only have about 87% of the available seats they had in 2019, according to Hayley Berg, economist at Hopper.</p> <p>"So you're still missing 15% of the flights and seats that would be otherwise taking off," Berg said.</p> <p>At the same time, the demand for flights has continued to surge as households book travel that was waylaid by the pandemic. On its quarterly earnings call Friday, Delta Air Lines CEO Ed Bastian said demand for air travel "remains very strong."</p> <p>"After two years of delaying travel, it is clear that consumers are getting out and traveling the world," Bastian said.</p> <p>Global demand has also gotten a boost from people who are choosing to spend less on products and more on experiences, the Delta Air Lines chief executive said. Business and international travel are also regaining some momentum, albeit slowly according to research from the consulting firm Deloitte.</p> <p>"Demand has not come close to being quenched by a hectic summer travel season," Bastian said.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the cost of jet fuel remains elevated, thanks in large part to the war in Ukraine and a decrease in crude oil refining capacity.</p> <p>"For airlines, the cost of flying each seat is higher than ever before, and for consumers, there are fewer seats available to buy and each is going to be more expensive," Berg said. "That is going to continue to drive up airfares."</p> <p>Experts say the best way to get ahead of the price surges is to book as soon as possible.</p> <p>"If you haven't booked holiday travel already, get ready for some really painful sticker shock," said Scott Mayerowitz, executive editor at The Points Guy travel savings website.</p>

	<p>Berg, the economist at Hopper, said travelers should also try to take advantage of any flexibility they might have in their schedules. Arriving or departing on weekdays, especially earlier in the week, can often result in savings even if it means staying an extra day or more.</p> <p>If there's any good news, it is that the rate of delays and cancellations that bedeviled travelers earlier this year has been reduced, according to data from flight tracking group FlightAware.com. FlightAware spokesperson Kathleen Bangs said that airlines have been quietly hiring more workers to help meet customer demand, which has helped reduce disruptions.</p> <p>Bangs, too, advises that planning early and staying flexible when planning travel is the best way to ensure a better travel experience.</p> <p>"Right now demand is high, which means book your seats," she wrote in an email to NBC News.</p> <p>If the price drops later, an individual can book at a cheaper price and get a refund (on a refundable ticket) or bank it as a future travel voucher if not refundable.</p> <p>"But for the greatest variety of seats available on the dates you want to travel and at the most attractive times of day," Bangs wrote, "book now."</p>
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HEADLINE	10/14 New Coast Guard strategy
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/featured/new-coast-guard-strategy-maps-out-urgent-changes-to-meet-evolving-challenges/
GIST	<p>The U.S. Coast Guard's new strategy for this year and beyond emphasizes the importance of innovation, technological advancements, partnerships, workforce and recruitment evolution, and acting "with a sense of urgency" to meet the challenges of a changing world in which "the pace of that change is accelerating."</p> <p>"Geopolitical strategic competition, economic volatility, climate change impacts, shifting workforce expectations, evolving technologies, and emerging maritime uses are converging and driving change for our Service," Commandant Adm. Linda Fagan wrote at the outset of the strategy. "If we do not adapt, this accelerating pace of change will overtake our ability to protect, defend, and save the American public we serve. Now is the time to move our Service forward."</p> <p>"We will transform our total workforce by modernizing how we recruit, hire, develop, train, and support our people and their families," she continued. "We will sharpen our competitive edge by driving a culture of innovation to integrate new technology and provide our people with reliable assets, systems, and infrastructure. And we will advance our mission excellence by pioneering new operating concepts while enhancing our readiness."</p> <p>Fagan stressed that USCG is "committed to building a diverse and inclusive workforce reflective of the American people," and creating "an environment where all people are respected, valued, and empowered."</p> <p>"Delivering improvements for our Coast Guard workforce is my top priority, so our Service can meet the challenges of tomorrow and ensure the enduring prosperity of America," she said. "...Tomorrow looks different. So will we."</p> <p>In summing up the strategic environment, the document notes as drivers of mission risk and opportunity the growing complexity in the workforce and competition for talent, rapid advancements in technology including a need to expand interconnectivity and integrate autonomous systems or artificial intelligence, the impacts of climate change including extreme weather and increased access to the polar regions, shifting economic factors that impact the Marine Transportation System, an evolving geopolitical landscape including aggression from nation-states, criminal organizations or extremist actors, and changing operational domains both in the maritime environment and in cyberspace.</p>

“As the external environment changes, so will the strategic drivers and their combined implications to our Coast Guard missions,” the [strategy](#) states. “We have the opportunity today to build readiness and resilience within our Service.”

That includes evolving the talent management system to “allow more career flexibility while meeting Service needs,” matching “the pace of changing technology, climate, economic pressures, political landscapes, and operational demands” to “compete with the evolving capabilities of our adversaries, embracing organizational and process changes to make the most of new technologies and, as necessary, identifying and closing gaps in our authorities,” and adjusting force posture and operating concepts to meet increasing demands as “increasing demand for the Coast Guard’s unique authorities, partnerships, and capabilities will stretch our organizational capacity and require clearer alignment between strategy, resource allocation, and mission execution to address the most consequential risks facing our Nation.”

The Coast Guard’s strategic framework focuses on three goals: “transform our total workforce,” “sharpen our competitive edge,” and “advance our mission excellence.”

To reach the workforce goal, USCG plans in part to “deploy innovative recruiting practices” and “build a talent management system that is transparent, readily understandable, and leverages data analytics to identify and solve problems while also supporting the flexibility that our current and future workforce desires.” To support the growth of the existing workforce, USCG plans to “develop individually tailored, on-demand, and modernized learning” and “deliver point-of-need healthcare and family services to bolster the resiliency of our workforce and families.”

To sharpen competitive edge, USCG intends to “focus and accelerate investments in technology and critical infrastructure to maximize mission outcomes and efficiently employ workforce effort and talent,” including by continuing “to deliver results through the Technology Revolution and investments in Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Cyber, and Intelligence (C5I) infrastructure and capabilities,” advance a “future-focused, integrated approach to design, deploy, and sustain our workforce, assets, systems, infrastructure, and logistics support,” foster “a culture of innovation to keep pace with accelerating changes in industrial capacity, global reach, and technology development,” and “leverage data as the catalyst to fuel the Coast Guard’s strategic advantage” including by “the advancement of data as a strategic asset for business and mission operations.”

USCG intends to advance mission excellence by being “brilliant at the basics” in its core requirements while reducing “the burden of sustainment, administrative, maintenance, and logistical requirements on our front-line units to enable greater focus on building readiness, proficiency, and resiliency,” utilizing “our assets, people, and capabilities in new ways to respond to growing demands and evolving threats,” building upon the service’s ability to lead in crises with the intent to “grow organic incident response capacity and reconceive our Reserve workforce employment model,” safeguarding a rapidly changing Marine Transportation System, and strengthening partnerships and improving maritime governance “through deliberate, coordinated, and impactful engagement.”

“Many of these changes will take years of dedicated and deliberate effort,” the strategy notes. “In addition to ongoing investment in modern capabilities to conduct our missions, we must focus long-term investments on our workforce, C5I, data, and shore infrastructure to support mission success across the enterprise.” Planning and investments “must account for planned service lives of more than 20 years and ensure the impact of strategic drivers, such as climate change and changing workforce needs, are considered in requirements development.”

“The transformation called for in this Strategy is foundational to the success of our Coast Guard and will continue beyond the next four years. It will require unwavering leadership, ongoing commitment, innovative thinking, and focused effort to bear results and become fully engrained in our Service,” the strategy states. “Enduring changes must be deliberately woven into organizational frameworks, processes, governance, and culture. We will seek to clearly understand the intended outcomes and potential effects of these actions as we implement initiatives in support of each priority. We will balance boldness with warranted risk; the status quo will no longer serve us as we look to the future. We will consistently

	<p>evaluate our progress towards actualizing the tenets in this Strategy. Most importantly, we remain committed to continuous improvement – we will learn to assess the changing world and its impacts both to our Service and to our missions, all while evolving to overcome these changes. This is our Coast Guard. Together we will transform our Service.”</p> <p>The Coast Guard Strategic Plan covering 2018-22 focused on three core priorities: “Maximize readiness today and tomorrow, address the nation’s complex maritime challenges, and deliver mission excellence anytime, anywhere.”</p> <p>Fagan’s predecessor, former Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz, emphasized that “presence equals influence” while warning of Russia and China’s growing Arctic operations and hunger for more control in the region expanding due to melting ice.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/14 BA.5 fading, BQ.1, BQ1.1. variants rise
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/science/2022/10/ba-5-is-finally-fading-sublineages-bq-1-and-bq-1-1-rise-from-variant-stew/
GIST	<p>New omicron coronavirus sublineages are finally threatening BA.5's dominance, as many experts fear the US is on the cusp of a winter wave.</p> <p>For months, BA.5 has reigned in the US and worldwide. The hypertransmissible omicron subvariant rose up early in the summer to elbow out previous subvariants BA.2 and BA.2.12.1, which had themselves displaced the original omicron strain, BA.1, that swept the world at the start of the year.</p> <p>But amid BA.5's months-long rule, hundreds of other sublineages have been stewing in the background, gaining new mutations. Of the legions of new viruses, the most concerning stem from BA.5 and BA.2. Many have seemed to independently converge on similar sets of mutations that allow the virus to better skirt strengthening immune responses, generated as more people get infections, vaccinations, and boosters.</p> <p>In a surveillance update posted online Friday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that two BA.5 sublineages have risen through the ranks to receive independent monitoring: BQ.1 and BQ.1.1. They now each are estimated to account for 5.7 percent of US infections, collectively accounting for 11.4 percent of cases. This represents a doubling of what the two collectively accounted for in the week prior (3.3 percent and 2.4. percent, respectively). Meanwhile, BA.5 is on the decline, falling from accounting for 75 percent of cases last week to 68 percent in the current week.</p> <p>BQ.1 and BQ.1.1 raise concern for their ability to evade immune responses. Both sublineages contain several mutations in their SARS-CoV-2 spike protein, including K444T, L452R, N460K, and F486V. BQ.1.1 contains an additional mutation, R346T. Preliminary data suggests that some of these mutations can help the virus dodge antibodies against SARS-CoV-2.</p> <p>A preliminary pre-print study suggests that BQ.1 and BQ.1.1 can significantly reduce the potency of neutralizing antibodies derived from the CoronaVac vaccine (not used in the US) and breakthrough omicron infections. However, it's unclear how mRNA vaccines and the new bivalent boosters for this fall—which are aimed at BA.5—will hold up against the rising sublineages. Experts are confident that the vaccines will continue to offer strong protection against severe disease and death—and thus urge that everyone get boosted when they can. But, it's unclear if BQ.1 and BQ.1.1 will significantly raise the risk of mild breakthrough infections, as was seen amid the towering BA.1 wave in January.</p> <p>With a clear growth advantage over BA.5, health officials note the possibility that BQ.1 and BQ.1.1 could drive a fall wave of infection as people head indoors and gather for upcoming holidays. Already, cases in Europe are surging, still largely driven by BA.5. For now, the US continues to see an overall lull in cases. But the situation could quickly change as the weather cools and the fall booster campaign remains sluggish. So far, only 14.8 million Americans (around 4.5 percent of the population) have gotten the new</p>

	bivalent booster, which is now eligible for everyone ages 5 and above. The White House is urging everyone to get a booster before Halloween.
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HEADLINE	10/15 Nigeria flooding kills 500, displaces 1.4M
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/10/15/nigeria-flooding-displacement-deaths/
GIST	<p>Widespread flooding caused by extreme rainfall and the release of excess water from a dam in neighboring Cameroon has left 1.4 million Nigerians displaced and claimed 500 lives, according to government officials.</p> <p>The floods also injured 1,546 people, inundated 70,566 hectares of farmland and “totally damaged” 45,249 homes, said Nasir Sani-Gwarzo, the permanent secretary in Nigeria’s Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development.</p> <p>Flooding has affected 27 of Nigeria’s 36 states, officials said.</p> <p>Satellite imagery from Landsat 9 showed major swelling of the Niger and Benue rivers in southern Nigeria, where, according to the U.S. space agency NASA, floodwaters “inundated numerous communities.” Where the rivers converged, the imagery revealed floodwaters overwhelming Lokoja, the capital of Kogi state.</p> <p>“Flooding continued to the south, including a noticeably widespread area spanning southern Kogi and the northern part of Anambra state,” NASA reported.</p> <p>Last week, 76 people drowned in Anambra when their boat capsized as they tried to escape high floodwaters, according to multiple news organizations. Floodwater had risen as high as rooftops in Kogi and Anambra, CNN reported. More than 600,000 people in Anambra have been displaced by flooding.</p> <p>“It’s saddening. All of a sudden, people are left with no homes and turned to beggars in weeks. No matter how rich they were, the displacement has reduced them so much,” Chiamaka Ibeanu, a registered nurse who lives in Onitsha in Anambra state, told The Washington Post.</p> <p>Ibeanu’s immediate family lives in Ossomari and Atani, nearby areas of Anambra close to the Niger River. She received word that her aunt and uncle had been displaced when their home was submerged.</p> <p>“The items she [her aunt] couldn’t pack are in water ... and she doesn’t have any other home,” Ibeanu said. “If not for the accommodation at the Primary Healthcare Center, she would have been stranded.”</p> <p>Since the beginning of Nigeria’s rainy season, which lasts from April to October, the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) and the Nigerian Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA), said that flooding was imminent and that parts of the country would experience heavier rainfall compounded by water flowing from Lagdo Dam in Cameroon. The agencies predicted that the volume of water across Nigeria would increase.</p> <p>“Communities must recognize that all disasters are local and they must take climate predictions and flood outlook warnings seriously,” said Alhaji Ali Grema, Nigeria’s director of humanitarian affairs.</p> <p>Sani-Gwarzo, the government permanent secretary, said the scale of this year’s flooding is similar to the last major flooding Nigeria experienced, in 2012, which displaced 1.3 million people and claimed the lives of 431. In 2012, 30 of the 36 states were affected.</p> <p>“The scale of devastation can only be compared to the 2012 floods,” said Sadiya Umar, the minister of humanitarian affairs, in a statement.</p> <p>The submergence of farmlands has sparked fears of increased food insecurity and higher prices.</p>

	<p>“Their farmlands are covered in the flood. This means that what was planted is swept away, and there might be food scarcity next year,” Ibeanu said.</p> <p>The humanitarian affairs ministry said the federal government has committed to providing relief to all communities.</p> <p>“We are taking all the necessary actions to bring relief to the people affected by the flood. All relevant agencies have renewed their commitment to strengthen their efforts in reaching out to the victims and bringing relief to them,” Sani-Gwarzo said.</p> <p>On Friday, the humanitarian affairs ministry announced that the Nigerian government had begun to distribute 12,000 metric tons of food and nonfood items to states devastated by the flooding.</p> <p>Nigeria’s national policy document on climate change, published in 2020, states that floods have increased in recent years and that climate change is expected “to increase the frequency and intensity of severe weather events.”</p> <p>“Unfortunately, many States in Nigeria largely lack the infrastructure necessary to respond adequately to such events,” the report states.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Russia grabs men off streets for Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/16/russia-mobilization-men/
GIST	<p>Police and military officers swooped down on a Moscow business center this week unannounced. They were looking for men to fight in Ukraine — and they seized nearly every one they saw. Some musicians, rehearsing. A courier there to deliver a parcel. A man from a Moscow service agency, very drunk, in his mid-50s, with a walking disability.</p> <p>“I have no idea why they took him,” said Alexei, who, like dozens of others in the office complex, was rounded up and taken to the nearest military enlistment office, part of a harsh new phase in the Russian drive.</p> <p>In cities and towns across Russia, men of fighting age are going into hiding to avoid the officials who are seizing them and sending them to fight in Ukraine.</p> <p>Police and military press-gangs in recent days have snatched men off the streets and outside Metro stations. They’ve lurked in apartment building lobbies to hand out military summonses. They’ve raided office blocks and hostels. They’ve invaded cafes and restaurants, blocking the exits.</p> <p>At a predawn sweep on the MIPSTROY1 construction company dormitories on Thursday, they took more than 200 men. On Sunday, they rounded up dozens at a Moscow shelter for the homeless.</p> <p>The press-gangs appear to descend at random. It is terrifying — and, at times, comically haphazard. Alexei, a 30-something pacifist, lives with his cat and, until he was hauled off, enjoyed hanging out with friends in bars, cafes and parks, going to concerts and planning his next holiday in Europe. (He and others in this report spoke on the condition that his last name be withheld out of concern for his safety. The Washington Post has confirmed the raid, but could not independently verify the details he provided.)</p> <p>An official barged into Alexei’s office on Tuesday. Two police officers and several plainclothes military officials arrived and demanded his identification. They ordered him to go with them quietly “or we will use force,” he said.</p> <p>“I was panicking,” he said. “I’d never been detained before. Everyone knows that if you are detained by the police in Russia, it’s very bad.”</p>

Suffering massive military casualties and repeated defeats in Ukraine, Russia has begun cannibalizing its male population. The hard-eyed pundits on state television are demanding more Ukrainian blood and more sacrifice from Russian men who they say have grown too used to soft living.

But the new phase of Putin's mobilization risks denting Russians' tacit support for the war and even his manufactured popularity — and could stir social unrest. Particularly in Moscow and St. Petersburg, major cities that until now have been largely untouched by the war.

More than 300,000 Russian men and their families have fled Russia since mobilization, reports from neighboring countries indicate. Authorities have set up mobilization points at border crossings to prevent departures. Many others want to leave after seeing the aggressive police raids and the first reports of the newly conscripted men dying in the war.

Activist Grigory Sverdlin, who left Russia and is based in Georgia, this month launched an organization, Go By The Forest, to advise men in Russia on avoiding the draft. He said group has consulted with 2,700 men in 11 days and told 60 drafted men how to surrender in Ukraine. At least eight have succeeded, he said.

"Obviously, people are very stressed because they are worried they will be pushed to shoot other people," Sverdlin said. "So people are afraid not only for themselves, but about taking part in this unjust war."

Yevgeny, 24, quit his job as a mechanic and is hiding at a relative's dacha far from Moscow. He has deleted his social media profiles and cut contact with friends. He spends his days working in the garden, and he goes to bed early and watches a lot of YouTube.

"I don't want to kill people, and I don't want to be killed, so I really have to lie low now," he said. "But even here, I don't feel safe. We live at a time when your neighbors could report on you. They might call police and say that there is a young guy staying in this house when he should be fighting fascists in Ukraine."

Yevgeny never supported the war. Now he has stopped driving for fear of being pulled over by police. He cannot leave Russia, because he has no passport, and even going to the store in the small village feels risky.

"I am panicking, and my mom is very nervous," he said. "I'm stressed, and I'm depressed. I try not to think how long this could go on, because you can go crazy."

Two of his friends are worse off. They were conscripted late last month, he said, and with little training are on their way to the front.

"I have a couple of friends who supported the war believing that there are Nazis there who kill poor Ukrainians and that Ukrainians should be liberated and so on. But they are changing their opinions after mobilization. They have started to ask questions and surf the internet for information," Yevgeny said.

"They don't want to die, especially when you don't understand why you should die," he said. "What is the point?"

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Friday that 222,000 of the 300,000 target had been conscripted and that the process would be completed within two weeks. Pro-war hard-liners insist a second round will be needed.

The raids in Moscow and St. Petersburg have been deeply controversial, in part because the cities have suffered comparatively few casualties in Ukraine. The burden of fighting has largely been borne by small ethnic groups and poorly educated men from impoverished rural regions.

In a sign that the government fears a growing urban backlash over the raids, Andrei Klishas, a senior member of Putin's United Russia party, said Friday that the conscription drives were illegal.

"It is inadmissible to grab everyone on the street indiscriminately," he said.

Antiwar sentiment could harden as the bodies of soldiers who were deployed just weeks earlier begin returning home for burial. Alexei Martynov, the 29-year-old head of a Moscow government department, was mobilized Sept. 23 and was killed Oct. 10. He was buried last week. Five soldiers from the Southern Urals region, mobilized on Sept. 26 and Sept. 29, were killed in Ukraine in early October, authorities in Chelyabinsk reported.

A comrade of the Chelyabinsk men who survived an overwhelming Ukrainian assault called a friend and described what happened, according to the transcript of a phone call published by BBC News Russian. He said he had been given no training. When he fled, he said, corpses lay everywhere.

"We got there the first day, having never fired a shot, and they sent us, like meat, straight to an assault unit, with two grenade launchers. I had at least read the instructions on how to use them." By Day 3, the soldier and his comrades were in front-line trenches.

Almost daily, videos surface on Russian social media of conscripted soldiers, angry because they have not been given decent uniforms, weapons, training or quarters. Testimonies about men who should be exempt being sent to fight are common. Aleksei Sachkov, a 45-year-old Moscow doctor, signed a contract to treat wounded soldiers in Voronezh, Russia, near the border with Ukraine. He stopped calling his wife, Natalia, on Sept. 24. She learned from Russia's military hotline a week later that he was fighting in Ukraine as part of a tank unit, she said in a video posted online.

As unease grows, men of military age are being turned back at borders as they try to leave the country. In March, weeks after Putin launched the invasion, he promised there would be no mobilization. But last month, he dashed the tacit assurance that the conflict would be fought only by professional soldiers in return for the Russian public's passive acceptance of the war. The widespread anger over Putin's Sept. 21 announcement suggests that public support for the war is lower than the Kremlin claims.

"It's the regime's agony, because quite a common opinion in Russia now is that this war is lost," Sverdlin said. "And it seems that just giving out summonses, detaining many thousands of people and sending them to war just buys this regime a bit more time. But it's just buying time, because, obviously, these people who were caught on the streets now won't make good soldiers because they don't know how to fight."

As the backlash intensifies, some Russians are confronting authorities and recording videos. A woman berated a team in the lobby of her St. Petersburg apartment building. A Russian truck driver posted video of himself confronting a police officer and a military enlistment official who tried to take him to the enlistment office.

"I don't give a s--- about your mobilization. You're the one who is eligible, not me. You've got a gun after all, not me. Why don't you go mobilize yourself?"

The police officer tried to write a charge, demanding the driver's documents.

"I'm not giving you my documents. Why should I?" the truck driver said, "If you fail to create order in your country, why do it in another country? And how? By just destroying it completely?"

A Russian truck driver posted video of himself confronting a police officer and a military enlistment official who tried to take him to the enlistment office. (Video: Svoboda Slova)

Putin faces limits of his military power as Ukraine recaptures land

In the rowdy hubbub of the military enlistment office where Alexei wound up, he said, many of the men were agitated, some were furious and others shrank into themselves. They queued at one office after

another, where they were made to sign the military summons, submit their documents and undergo a medical examination. Many were office workers seized on the street. A couple of “strange ones” told Alexei they were volunteers, looking for an exciting lifestyle change.

He was shocked by how many men meekly donned the army uniforms that were handed to them and let themselves be taken, apparently directly to training bases. One of his work colleagues was among them.

“I saw men who were lost and confused, and at the same time very weak,” he said. “They didn’t want to fight for themselves. They were given papers and obediently signed them all. They weren’t focused. They just stared into space, as if they had given up.”

For Alexei, the threats and bluff continued for hours as officials pressured him to sign the military summons. He refused. Police were called. They took no action, but a police guard at the door would not let him leave.

He watched the queues of nervous men. The drunken city worker was in a deep sleep. A member of the elite Russian Guard special police threw a noisy tantrum about the attempt to enlist him.

Alexei called a lawyer. He entered the office of the military commissar, filming him on his cellphone, demanding to know the legal basis for holding him.

“He got very angry and shouted at me to leave his office.” At 8 p.m., he was finally allowed to leave. Now he wants to leave Russia but fears he could be conscripted at the border.

“I want to wait until this is over, in a safe place.”

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HEADLINE	10/16 Inflation darkens global economic outlook
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/high-inflation-darkens-global-economic-outlook-11665918002?mod=hp_major_pos1#cxrecs_s
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—Policy makers around the world see rising risks that the global economic slowdown could turn into a steeper slump due to strong inflation, high energy costs and climbing interest rates.</p> <p>Another bad U.S. inflation report last week is likely to keep the Federal Reserve lifting interest rates at a rapid clip. That could help spur the U.S. dollar higher, further elevating the cost of imports and debt service for many countries. Key energy producers are crimping supply, feeding price pressures and slowing economic activity, particularly in Europe. New data from China showed consumer spending falling sharply, another sign of cooling economic growth.</p> <p>“The worst is yet to come,” said International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva at a Thursday briefing, as finance officials gathered in Washington for meetings hosted by the IMF and the World Bank. “Across many economies, recession risks are rising.”</p> <p>Economies representing more than a third of global output will contract next year, while the world’s three largest economies—the U.S., the European Union and China—will essentially stall, the IMF forecasts. Overall, the fund projects 2.7% growth in 2023, down from 3.2% this year.</p> <p>“The situation is worse than during Covid-19,” Mohamed Maait, the Egyptian finance minister, said Wednesday on a panel hosted by the Center for Global Development.</p> <p>Many of the policy makers at the meetings see high U.S. inflation and the Fed’s response as a central threat to their own economic prospects.</p>

The U.S. consumer-price index rose 8.2% in September from a year earlier, with core prices—which exclude volatile food and energy prices—rising 6.6%. That was the fastest rate in four decades, a sign of strong underlying price pressures.

The core-CPI reading likely keeps the Fed on track to raise its benchmark interest rate by 0.75 percentage point next month. The report heightens the risk officials will delay a slowdown in rate increases.

The Fed's rapid rate increases this year have helped draw investors into U.S. markets and [pushed up the value of the dollar](#). A stronger greenback increases the costs of dollar-denominated imports and debt service for many other countries. It also puts pressure on other central banks to raise their own interest rates to protect their currencies, possibly further slowing growth.

"All of us would like to know what will be the Fed reaction in the coming months because the strength of the dollar keeps the pressure on our currencies," Barnabás Virág, deputy governor of Hungary's central bank, said Monday at an event sponsored by the Institute of International Finance.

The U.S. economy has shown signs of resilience this year. The [labor market is cooling](#) but remains healthy. [U.S. retail spending was unchanged in September](#) from August and up 8.2% from a year earlier, the Commerce Department said Friday.

The IMF forecasts the U.S. economy will expand 1% next year, down from 1.6% this year. Economists polled by The Wall Street Journal put the probability of a U.S. recession in the next 12 months at 63%, up from 49% in July's survey.

The U.S. economy's momentum worries other countries because it gives the Fed latitude to raise interest rates even more, Sri Mulyani Indrawati, the finance minister of Indonesia, said in an interview.

A weakening global economy, high interest rates and a strong dollar "really can hurt all countries in the world," Mrs. Sri Mulyani said.

"A global recession is very possible," she said.

[Russia's war in Ukraine](#) weighs on the world economy. It has hampered exports of critical food and fertilizers from the countries, endangering 345 million people, the IMF said. Russia has throttled back natural-gas supplies to Europe, [sending manufacturers there reeling](#) and pushing many economies there to the brink of recession.

"Europe faces particularly serious strains because of what's happening to energy prices there," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said during a news conference Friday. Many emerging-market countries "face a host of significant problems," she added.

Meanwhile, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its Russia-led allies recently announced a major production cut, which raised oil prices. The International Energy Agency warned Thursday the decision could be a tipping point for the global economy to enter a recession.

There is no official definition of a global recession, but many economists say one essential element is economic growth falling below population growth, or roughly 1.1%. The World Bank forecasts global growth of 1.9% next year.

"That's dangerously close to a world recession," said David Malpass, World Bank Group president. Another risk to the global economy is the danger that rapidly rising interest rates will trigger financial-system disorder, the IMF warned in a report last week.

A U.K. tax-cut plan aimed at stimulating growth triggered a major bond selloff last month that forced the Bank of England to [step in to stabilize the financial system](#). The U.K. government [reversed key parts of the plan](#) Friday, partly because of the market reaction.

Economic policy makers around the world are monitoring stresses in financial markets, knowing from history that climbing interest rates can cause [threats to financial stability](#) from unexpected sources.

Lending from the Fed's so-called discount window for emergency loans ticked up in recent weeks, to \$7.67 billion as of Wednesday, the highest level since June 2020. The Fed also lent \$6.5 billion to two foreign central banks last week, part of standing arrangements to extend dollars and relieve pressures in dollar-funding markets.

"The thing I'm mindful of is we're dealing with an economy that is readjusting to an extraordinary shock," said Kansas City Fed President Esther George in a webinar hosted by S&P Global Ratings on Friday.

"Moving too fast can disrupt financial markets and the economy in a way that could ultimately be self-defeating," she said.

The persistent uncertainty in the economic and financial outlook could soon start to weigh on how businesses make hiring decisions, John Waldron, [Goldman Sachs Group](#) Inc.'s president, said Friday, speaking at the IIF conference. He said firms could consider hiring fewer people "and maybe making some layoffs."

In China, strict Covid-19 lockdown policies have curbed its economic growth, particularly during the second quarter of 2022. China's overextended property sector is slowing rapidly. China's slump is expected to add to hiccups in global supply chains and curb [global trade](#).

All the risks to growth could be particularly painful for middle- and low-income countries. [Roughly 60% of the world's poorest nations](#) are in or at risk of debt stress—unable to meet their financial obligations—and many are struggling with higher costs of imported food and energy, according to the IMF.

"The sense that one gets from the meetings is that uncertainty is so high, it's difficult to see light at the end of the tunnel," José de Lima Massano, governor of the National Bank of Angola, said in an interview.

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HEADLINE	10/15 Public war sentiment in Russia darkens
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/public-sentiment-in-russia-darkens-over-ukraine-war-11665826202?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos3
GIST	<p>MOSCOW—President Vladimir Putin's massive military mobilization and escalating talk of nuclear weapons in the protracted Ukraine conflict are rattling many Russians, including urban elites for whom the war had seemed far in the background.</p> <p>The WhatsApp messaging group for residents of a stately post-World War II apartment building on a major thoroughfare in downtown Moscow, viewed by The Wall Street Journal, is peppered with messages of concern: "Is the bomb shelter in the basement still habitable?"; "Who do we need to contact to get it inspected?"; "Where are the entrances located?"</p> <p>In some urban centers, apartments are being put up for sale or rent at fire-sale rates, say real-estate experts, as hundreds of thousands of Russian men have left the country since Mr. Putin ordered the call-up of reservists to generate new troops to fight in Ukraine.</p> <p>Nearly half of Russians said they were alarmed and felt fearful following Mr. Putin's announcement of the draft, while another 13% said they felt anger, according to a poll last month by Levada Center, a nongovernmental sociological research organization, of 1,631 people over the age of 18 in urban and rural areas of 50 regions.</p>

A poll by the state Public Opinion Foundation published around the same time as the Levada survey also showed that the prevailing mood among Russians was now one of unease, according to 70% of 1,500 respondents.

“Now is a really unusual situation for our country and a new collective psychotrauma,” Ekaterina Kolesnikova, director of North-West, a private research center for the study of management practices and the social-political mood, wrote on the group’s Telegram page earlier this month.

The disquiet—especially among well-to-do urban Russians who had been somewhat sheltered from a war in which many of those killed [were from poorer regions](#)—threatens to erode support for Mr. Putin, said some experts who follow Russia’s domestic policies and their political and social repercussions.

Both Western Kremlin-watchers and many Russian political analysts who back Mr. Putin say that [public discontent](#) over the Russian president’s policies is unlikely to throw him off course or shake his control. But observers of Russia’s political landscape say the dissatisfaction threatens to spread, and the Kremlin does closely monitor Mr. Putin’s approval ratings. Policy analysts noted that while many Russians were willing to tolerate their president’s restrictions on political freedoms, they did so on the understanding that their lives and the country’s prosperity wouldn’t be destabilized.

“Many people feel disappointed, somehow deceived even, in the sense that they simply did not expect this turn of events,” said Grigorii Golosov, a political scientist at the European University at St. Petersburg. “Of course, it undermines their trust both in the Russian leadership in the short term and in the long-term perspective.”

The Kremlin didn’t respond to a request for comment on whether it was concerned about growing public discontent.

Presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said recently that it was understandable that current events would trigger certain unsettled emotions, but the Kremlin hadn’t seen much polarization in Russian society. He told the RBC Russian business media group in an interview last month before the mobilization that this year had seen a “union among citizens and their consolidation around the head of state.”

A number of issues are contributing to growing unease. The [annexation of Ukrainian territory](#) without Russia’s having full control, [failures on the battlefield](#) that allowed Ukraine to regain ground, and Mr. Putin’s threats to use nuclear weapons are feeding public uncertainty and doubt about the soundness of Kremlin strategy, analysts said.

One of the prevailing concerns, according to analysts, is the recent mobilization, which has left few segments of the population untouched. Officially called a partial mobilization, the call-up has wide reach that is hitting home in many cities. It includes men with previous military service or expertise and those currently in the reserve, among other criteria, according to official state media. Early in the war, Mr. Putin promised that only professional military personnel would participate in what the Kremlin calls its special military operation.

On Friday, Mr. Putin said the mobilization effort would be completed in two weeks and that at this time no further call-up was planned. He said that some 222,000 out of a scheduled draft of 300,000 people had been mobilized, with 16,000 already performing combat missions.

Russia’s Ministry of Defense said last month that 5,937 Russian soldiers had died since the conflict began in February. The Pentagon estimates the number of Russia’s war dead and wounded could be as high as 80,000.

Public anxiety is reflected in recent posts on a St. Petersburg group page on VKontakte, Russia’s version of Facebook, where a woman who identified herself as Yanochka Pogodina wrote, “This is some kind of terrible dream. Lord, let us wake up in peacetime!”

	<p>A man identifying himself as Pavel Petrov responded, “Yanochka, this won’t be settled by itself. Everything is going to hell.”</p> <p>In the Irkutsk region of southeastern Siberia, psychologists, psychotherapists and psychiatrists are offering free consultation to the relatives of those called up to fight, according to health authorities in the region.</p> <p>Following the announcement of mobilization, Maria Gribova, director of a construction and real-estate consulting firm in St. Petersburg, noticed an increase in people there selling their apartments at a discount on previous market rates—sometimes between 10% and 20%. “People are worried about the safety of their money,” she said. “People don’t want to take additional risks... We don’t know if tomorrow we will have our man with us or if he will suddenly be called up.”</p> <p>There has been a marked increase in people renting out their apartments in big cities, either because they are leaving or as a source of additional income, and this has brought down rent prices, according to specialists in the rental market.</p> <p>“The most negative thing that has already happened is the disappearance of the illusion that hostilities are taking place somewhere far away and do not affect economic development,” said Oleg Buklemishev, director of the Economic Policy Research Center at Moscow State University.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Higher heating bills poised to hit this winter
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/higher-heating-bills-poised-to-hit-u-s-households-this-winter-11665805210?mod=hp_lead_pos6
GIST	<p>High fuel prices have been a big driver of inflation, pumping up the cost of summer travel and air conditioning, and federal energy forecasters say that staying warm this winter will be more expensive as well.</p> <p>Americans should expect bigger home-heating bills compared with last winter, thanks to higher prices for natural gas, heating oil, propane and electricity as well as slightly colder weather, the U.S. Energy Information Administration said in its seasonal outlook.</p> <p>Government energy specialists predict that it will cost \$931 to warm the typical home that is heated with natural gas between this month and March. That is up 28% from a year earlier in nominal terms. If it gets colder than federal weather forecasters expect, heating bills could be 51% more than last year for homes with gas-fueled furnaces and boilers, which is nearly half of U.S. households. A 19% year-over-year jump is anticipated if it is a warm winter.</p> <p>The base case for those who burn heating oil—mainly in the Northeast, where low imports and closed refineries have reduced supply—is for 27% greater expense. Those with propane, popular in rural areas, and electric heat are expected to pay 5% and 10% more, respectively, if temperature forecasts hold.</p> <p>“Winter energy expenditures for most households are likely to be higher than last winter,” said Joseph DeCarolis, EIA administrator. “Much higher if the weather is very cold.”</p> <p>A really chilly winter could throw energy markets back into overdrive and turn up the pressure on central bankers, who are fighting what has been the highest inflation in four decades with the steepest interest-rate increases since the early 1980s.</p> <p>Fuel prices have come down from summer highs as inventories built up from critically low levels.</p> <p>The declines were reflected in September inflation data, which registered a 19.8% rise in energy costs from a year earlier. That is less than half the year-over-year increase in June and is the slowest gain since March 2021. It is a big reason for the decline in overall inflation from August.</p>

Federal weather officials believe that, on balance, this winter will be colder than last and require more energy to heat homes. Though milder temperatures are expected in the Southwest and along the Atlantic Coast, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration forecasts colder weather in the frigid parts of the country, where the most heating fuel is consumed.

As recently as August, the outlook for winter-fuel prices looked a lot worse for consumers. [Natural-gas futures](#) hit shale-era highs above \$10 per million British thermal units, and the amount of gas in storage was more than 12% below normal levels. [Sky-high coal prices](#) kept gas consumption among U.S. power plants at all-time highs, while Russia's invasion of Ukraine created insatiable demand in Europe for overseas shipments of liquefied natural gas, or LNG.

Natural-gas prices have declined by about a third since then. They would have likely lingered in double digits had a big LNG shipping terminal in Texas not shut down following [a June fire](#), said Rusty Braziel, chief executive of the consulting firm RBN Energy LLC.

Freeport LNG's outage has reduced U.S. export capacity by nearly one-sixth.

"Instead of going on a ship, these volumes went into inventories, effectively giving the market a reprieve," Mr. Braziel said. "As painful an event as it has been for the folks at Freeport and its customers, it actually helped the U.S. dodge a bullet this summer."

Between the gas that otherwise would have been shipped abroad and domestic production that has lately notched daily records, the volumes pumped into U.S. storage facilities over the past month have been the biggest four-week build of the shale era, EIA data show.

Injections of gas into underground caves by traders hoping to sell the fuel for higher prices this winter have halved the deficit to normal inventories that pushed up prices in August.

Analysts and traders say inventories are still low enough that there could be price surges during very cold weather, especially once Freeport resumes operations. The company has said it is aiming to restart next month.

Natural-gas futures ended Friday at \$6.453 per million British thermal units, declining for the eighth consecutive week but still 19% higher than a year earlier.

"While we think gas prices are close to fair value, do not write off volatility this winter," said RBC Capital Markets analyst Christopher Louney.

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HEADLINE	10/16 Economists predict recession, job losses
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/economists-now-expect-a-recession-job-losses-by-next-year-11665859869?mod=hp_lead_pos4
GIST	<p>The U.S. will enter a recession in the coming 12 months as the Federal Reserve battles to bring down persistently high inflation, the economy contracts and employers cut jobs in response, according to The Wall Street Journal's latest survey of economists.</p> <p>On average, economists put the probability of a recession in the next 12 months at 63%, up from 49% in July's survey. It is the first time the survey pegged the probability above 50% since July 2020, in the wake of the last short but sharp recession.</p> <p>Their forecasts for 2023 are increasingly gloomy. Economists now expect gross domestic product to contract in the first two quarters of the year, a downgrade from the last quarterly survey, whereby they penciled in mild growth.</p>

On average, the economists now predict GDP will contract at a 0.2% annual rate in the first quarter of 2023 and shrink 0.1% in the second quarter. In July's survey, they expected a 0.8% growth rate in the first quarter and 1% growth in the second.

Employers are expected to respond to lower growth and weaker profits by cutting jobs in the second and third quarters. Economists believe that nonfarm payrolls will decline by 34,000 a month on average in the second quarter and 38,000 in the third quarter. According to the last survey, they expected employers to add about 65,000 jobs a month in those two quarters.

Forecasters have ratcheted up their expectations for a recession because they increasingly doubt the Fed can keep raising rates [to cool inflation](#) without inducing higher unemployment and an economic downturn. Some 58.9% of economists said they think the Fed will raise interest rates too much and cause unnecessary economic weakness, up from 45.6% in July.

“‘Soft landing’ will likely remain a mythical outcome that never actually comes to pass,” said Daniil Manaenkov, an economist at the University of Michigan. A [soft landing](#) occurs when the Fed tightens monetary policy enough to reduce inflation, but without causing a recession.

“The coming drag from higher rates and stronger dollar is enormous and will knock off about 2.5 percentage points from next year's GDP” growth, said Aneta Markowska, chief economist at Jefferies LLC. “In light of this, it's hard to imagine how the U.S. can avoid a recession.”

Economists' average forecasts suggest that they expect a recession to be relatively short-lived. Of the economists who see a greater than 50% chance of a recession in the next year, their average expectation for the length of a recession was eight months. The average postwar recession lasted 10.2 months.

For the year as a whole, they expect the economy to grow 0.4% in 2023, through the fourth quarter compared with the fourth quarter of the prior year. In 2024, they see the economy growing 1.8%.

Still, forecasters expect the labor market to weaken in the months and years ahead. They predict the unemployment rate, which was 3.5% in September, will rise to 3.7% in December and 4.3% in June 2023. Economists' average forecast for the jobless rate at the end of next year is 4.7%, and they expect it to stay broadly at that level through 2024. While a 4.7% unemployment rate is low by historical comparison and [indicative of the current worker shortage](#), it suggests that the Fed's efforts to bring down inflation will [inflict some pain on workers](#).

“The Federal Reserve is choosing between the lesser of two evils—take a recession with a rise in unemployment today or risk a more corrosive and entrenched inflation taking root,” said Diane Swonk of KPMG. “The risks of a misstep are large given the sins that low rates likely papered over,” she added.

The past few years have been volatile for the U.S. economy as it faced shocks including the [Covid-19 pandemic](#) and [Russia's invasion of Ukraine](#). In 2019, before the pandemic hit, the economy grew 2.6%. GDP contracted 1.5% in 2020 and bounced back strongly in 2021, posting 5.7% growth. This year, as consumers and businesses grapple with high inflation and supply-chain issues, economists expect the economy to eke out growth of just 0.2%.

Interest-rate [increases by the Fed are expected to](#) further slow demand for housing next year. Economists expect home prices to decline 2.2% in 2023, measured by the U.S. Federal Housing Finance Agency's seasonally adjusted purchase-only house price index. That would mark the first such decline since 2011.

The Fed has raised its benchmark federal-funds rate by 0.75 point [at each of its last three meetings](#), most recently in September, bringing the rate to a range of 3% to 3.25%. Another [uncomfortably high inflation reading](#) for September is likely to keep the Federal Reserve on track to increase interest rates by 0.75 percentage point at its meeting next month.

	<p>Economists on average expect the Fed to lift the federal-funds rate to 4.267% in December, which implies at least one more increase of 0.5 point that month. They see the federal-funds rate peaking at 4.551% in June next year.</p> <p>Most economists expect that the Fed will eventually have to reverse course and start cutting rates late next year or in early 2024. Some 30% of economists expect the central bank to lower rates in the fourth quarter of 2023, and 28.3% expect the next rate cut in the first quarter of 2024.</p> <p>The survey of 66 economists was conducted Oct. 7 to 11. Not every economist answered every question.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Key flaw in Russia's war strategy
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/failure-to-control-ukraines-skies-betrays-key-flaw-in-russias-war-strategy-11665915386?mod=hp_lead_pos8
GIST	<p>Russia's struggling invasion of Ukraine has faced problems from poor coordination to unmotivated soldiers, but overshadowing and aggravating all was a critical blunder in the war's early days, say Western military officials: failure to win control of Ukraine's skies.</p> <p>Without air superiority, Russia has been unable to stop Ukrainian attacks on its soldiers with U.S.-supplied M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or Himars, and other weapons. Kyiv's forces have capitalized on Russia's limited ability to respond by retaking hundreds of square miles of territory from the invading army since early last month.</p> <p>Russia has recently reacted to Ukraine's battlefield successes by unleashing deadly attacks on civilian targets using missiles and drones. But even those strikes betray weakness in Moscow's air strategy, Western military analysts say, because it must rely on remote aircraft rather than piloted planes, out of fear they will be shot down.</p> <p>"Failure to achieve air supremacy is one of the decisive things that cost Russia their advantage in the war," said Jakub Janovsky, a military analyst with Oryx, an open-source intelligence consulting firm that has tracked equipment losses throughout the war.</p> <p>Russia's Defense Ministry didn't respond to a request for comment on its air war in Ukraine.</p> <p>When Russia launched its large-scale invasion on Feb. 24, military experts on both sides of the fight assumed Moscow would target Ukraine's air defenses and quickly work to eliminate them before pushing further. That was the approach U.S. forces took in both Gulf wars and Libya because it helps to protect attacking aircrews and ground or naval forces the aircraft support.</p> <p>But after Russia achieved some initial successes hitting Ukraine's anti-aircraft systems and disrupting its communications backbone, Kyiv regrouped and managed to thwart Russian air attacks. By early March, Ukraine was shooting down growing numbers of Russian planes and helicopters. Ukraine's air force, despite early losses, kept flying and engaged Moscow's pilots in dog fights.</p> <p>By spring, Russian warplanes were staying in Russian airspace or over parts of Ukraine firmly under Moscow's control. Russian bombers were launching cruise missiles from behind the protection of Moscow's air-defense systems. Russian military helicopters in Ukraine moved increasingly cautiously.</p> <p>As a result of that air force hesitation, Russian ground troops that might have relied on their planes and helicopters to provide covering fire instead sat exposed to attacks from Ukrainian aircraft, drones and artillery.</p> <p>Ukraine's ability to protect its air defenses in the war's opening weeks ranks alongside the defense of Kyiv, the capital, in accomplishments that allowed its government and military to retain control over most of the country despite relentless Russian attacks, say analysts.</p>

“The Ukrainians are in a far stronger position than they would be if the Russians had achieved air supremacy,” said Douglas Barrie, a senior fellow for military airspace at the International Institute of Strategic Studies, a think tank in London.

Unlike Ukraine’s fight against Russian ground forces, which from the start [was aided enormously by donated Western weapons](#), its air defense has relied largely on Soviet-era systems that Ukraine has maintained and improved over three decades. In many ways, Russia’s failure to disable the systems is more notable because Moscow uses the same equipment, including S-300 long-range surface-to-air missiles, or SAMs, plus smaller and highly mobile Buk and Tor launchers, analysts say.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, Ukraine had a particularly large number of the systems and still has a high ratio of systems to territory compared with standards of countries in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, said Mykola Bielieskov, a research fellow at Ukraine’s National Institute for Strategic Studies, a government think tank.

Mr. Bielieskov said Ukraine was able to preserve its air defenses and part of its air force by moving planes and defensive systems from their normal locations and dispersing them. He credited U.S. intelligence before the war with providing Ukraine enough warning to protect its equipment. Intelligence early in the invasion on the timing and direction of attacks also helped Ukraine position equipment where it could help most, he said.

“Russia bombed airfields and SAM radars, but the strikes weren’t successful,” Mr. Bielieskov said.

The Kremlin initially hoped to gain control of Ukraine within about three days, expecting a groundswell of support after toppling the government, and so might have limited its opening attacks, said Mr. Barrie.

“At the beginning, it was almost as if they didn’t want to break too much because they wanted the country to run smoothly” after their expected takeover, Mr. Barrie said. Russian forces also don’t appear to have launched follow-up attacks on missile batteries, radar installations or command-and-control centers to ensure they had been disabled—a standard practice among NATO members, he said.

Further helping Ukraine was Russian air forces’ lack of practice in complex suppression of air defenses, said Mr. Bielieskov. Such maneuvers require careful coordination of electronic-warfare assets with attack aircraft and missile strikes.

By mid-May, Russian losses in Ukraine had fallen to fewer than 10 planes and helicopters a week, compared with more than 60 a week in early March, according to Oryx data. Since Ukraine launched its offensive in the east and south last month, which quickly retook thousands of square miles of territory and inflicted heavy losses on Russian ground troops, its losses of piloted aircraft have risen slightly.

“The losses indicate the air force is being used as a fire brigade when local forces are in trouble,” said Mr. Janovsky.

Kyiv last week said it had downed four Russian helicopters within 18 minutes. The report wasn’t independently verified.

Ukraine, which has far fewer aircraft than Russia, also flies cautiously and has suffered losses. But its support from local populations, extensive use of drones and access to the U.S. intelligence have helped it offset its lack of air superiority. Additionally, Russian forces in Ukraine have limited ability to shoot down Ukrainian aircraft, which gives them more leeway to operate. Ukrainian planes have recently been attacking Russian air defenses in territory Moscow controls.

Now Moscow has replaced piloted planes with missiles and drones—including [large numbers supplied by Iran](#)—for strikes deep into Ukraine. Many have targeted civilian infrastructure such as power plants. A lot of the strikes are poorly targeted, resulting in widespread death and injuries.

	In response, NATO members on Wednesday pledged to give Kyiv additional modern air-defense units and to create a comprehensive air-defense network. While that complex technical work will take time, it could give Ukraine one of Europe's most advanced defenses against airstrikes of all kinds, military officials say.
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HEADLINE	10/15 Florida to fly migrants to Illinois, Delaware
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/15/florida-governor-ron-desantis-fly-migrants-illinois-delaware
GIST	<p>The Republican governor of Florida, Ron DeSantis, plans to continue flying undocumented migrants to Democratic strongholds, his spokeswoman said on Saturday, a day after released records showed the state paid nearly \$1m to arrange two sets of flights to Delaware and Illinois.</p> <p>Documents released on Friday showed that the planned flights will transport about 100 migrants. They were scheduled for before 3 October but were halted or postponed. The contractor hired by Florida extended the window for the trips until 1 December, according to memos released by the state transportation department.</p> <p>Asked why the flights were postponed, DeSantis' communications director, Taryn Fenske, said Florida had been busy dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Ian.</p> <p>"While Florida has had all hands on deck responding to our catastrophic hurricane, the immigration relocation program remains active," Fenske said.</p> <p>The flights would be a follow-up to 14 September flights from Texas to Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, that carried 49 mostly Venezuelan migrants to the island where the former president Barack Obama owns a home. Local officials were not told in advance that the migrants were coming.</p> <p>DeSantis claimed responsibility for the flights as part of a campaign to focus attention on what he has called the Biden administration's failed border policies. He was joining the Republican Texas governor, Greg Abbott, in sending migrants to Democratic strongholds without advance warning.</p> <p>DeSantis is also thought likely to run for the Republican presidential nomination in 2024.</p> <p>Earlier this year, the Florida legislature approved a \$12m budget item to relocate people from Florida to another location. The money came from interest earned from federal funds given to Florida under the American Rescue Plan, legislation passed to help states recover from the Covid pandemic.</p> <p>While the migrant flights to Martha's Vineyard originated in Texas, the charter plane carrying them made a stop in Florida. DeSantis has said that the migrants' intention was to come to Florida.</p> <p>The documents released on Friday gave no details of how migrants were recruited in San Antonio for the Martha Vineyard flights or who was hired to conduct that part of the operation.</p> <p>The Martha's Vineyard flight has also spawned lawsuits accusing Florida of lying to the migrants to get them to agree to the flights.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/15 Kurds shelled as Iran scapegoats for unrest
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/15/kurds-shelled-iran-scapegoats-unrest
GIST	Picking through a pile of twisted metal, Rebaz, a Kurdish Iranian fighter, stooped to cradle a jagged chrome piece that was dug from the ruins of his base. "This was part of a Fateh missile," he said. "It's one of the biggest that the Iranians have in their arsenal. It's from the day they tried to wipe us out."

The heap included other wreckage – of rockets and kamikaze drones that had devastated this small outpost, just east of Erbil in northern [Iraq](#), a fortnight ago. Since then, jittery guards had looked from the ruins towards the east, from where more than two dozen ballistic missiles and another dozen kamikaze drones blazed from a blue sky a fortnight ago.

The attack marked one of the biggest barrages of ballistic missiles anywhere in the region in at least the past decade and, across northern Iraq, few saw it coming. Except for the Iranian [Kurds](#) who have guarded this hilltop through war and insurrection, and knew what to expect from Iran, a mortal foe under mounting pressure at home.

With the attacks, Iran sought to lay the blame [for protests at home](#) on a long-term enemy, the fighters for an independent Kurdistan, a state the Kurdish ethnic group hope to one day establish on land currently in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria.

The missile barrages, three in total, sent close to 70 long-range warheads to Iranian Kurdish bases in northern Iraq, killing 14 fighters, wounding 58 and levelling bases that had fought Islamic State, the Iraqi army and Shia militias over the last eight years.

They came as popular demonstrations were gathering momentum in Iran, pitting the country's women and youth against one of the region's most formidable police states. Two weeks later, and nearly six weeks into protests that continue to rattle Iran's theocratic leaders, the mood on the streets remains febrile.

Faced with an impetus the regime did not expect, or know how to contain, officials have attempted to divert the conflict from the streets of towns, cities and even villages, to age-old geographic flashpoints and to the more modern battleground of the information space. On both counts Iranian attempts are flailing.

"They are not winning on the ground, and they are not deceiving anyone in Iran, or outside," said Gen Hussein Yazdanpanah, the leader of an Iranian Kurdish group, the Kurdistan Freedom party (PAK). "Iran wants to demonstrate to the world that the protests are not relevant to what is happening inside the country and are instead driven by affairs from the outside. They are exporting this. They want the world's attention to be taken away."

Yazdanpanah had come to know every inch of the hilltop that he had called a base over the past eight years. From down the road towards Kirkuk and over the hills nearby, IS had once hovered. When they were gone, Shia militias and the Iraqi army had tried to advance after an ill-fated Kurdish referendum five years ago.

At all times, the Iranian Kurds stood their ground, committed to a broader Kurdish project as much as they were keeping Iran at bay. The general rejects Iranian claims that the protests are being driven by a Kurdish nationalist push. "It didn't start that way, and it isn't like that now," he said. "We are tied to our people and the protesters. But it is not us that started these events. It is not our forces that are on the streets.

"But they have to know that we will not stay silent in the face of this and we will defend our daughters' blood."

The smell of death rose from the rubble; two fighters remained unaccounted for and only heavy equipment could shift the enormous piles of ruins caused by the ballistic missiles. What remained of the PAK's scorched arsenal lay baking in the autumn sun. But even among the devastation, work had started on a new base a mile away. "We will prevail," said Yazdanpanah. "But we are not satisfied with the way the international community has responded."

As well as watching events unfold in Iran, Iranian Kurds are well versed in the war in Ukraine, where a steady supply of powerful weapons have helped fight back a Russian invasion and could help turn the course of the war. Kurdish forces in Iraq received weapons while the war against IS was raging. But that was nearly five years ago and, once again, the Kurds feel history, and their friends, have forgotten them.

“This territory is supervised by the international coalition and they know our role in fighting Isis. How can an airspace be monitored by them and something like this be allowed to happen? It’s like tying our hands and letting the wolf come for us. We are a people that has regularly been slaughtered for the price of supporting democracy and human rights. The only place in the region that allows room for democracy to be fertilised is here.”

He implored the international community to consider reimposing a no-fly zone, more than 20 years after another such zone was lifted. The first was to deter Saddam Hussein from attacking the Kurdish north. “The solution is to close our skies and to stop Iran targeting us. Iran does not respect diplomatic relations, nor soft power. It only knows strength.

“The weapons that are being given to Ukraine could also be given to us. Even a small amount. You can give the Kurds in Iran similar support. Why are you not supporting a stateless people who have fought Isis and supported your interests? Without us, they would have made it to Europe.”

In nearby Erbil, which has so far been spared the Iranian barrage, but where officials are also considering calling for a new no-fly zone, an Iranian Kurdish refugee, Ibrahim, 29, from Urmia in the country’s north-west, said he was hopeful the uprising would continue to gain momentum.

“There was a time when protests in Iran happened every 10 years or so, but that gap has been closing. It’s now every two years, and that shows that the regime is losing its hold.

“They can’t think they can continue to run a repressive regime like this in an information age. The worst thing for them was the Covid lockdown. People and students had all that time to stay at home and look at the internet. They saw how life could be and they wanted a taste of it.

“It is not an armed uprising for now. And I hope it doesn’t become one. But if it does, the problem will be, where would those weapons come from. This needs to be taken very seriously.”

An Iranian Kurdish woman, Arina, 28, from Sanandaj, said: “It’s never been like this, all minorities and ethnicities fighting together for basic human rights. I have many friends in the streets whom I talk to daily.

“Every time I talk to my friends I say they’re very motivated. It’s very different from previous protests. In some areas the government has already lost control.”

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HEADLINE	10/15 War critics anger: low morale, poor training
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/15/my-son-has-died-russia-mourns-loss-of-first-drafted-soldiers-in-ukraine
GIST	<p>Andrei Nikiforov, a lawyer from St Petersburg, was one of the hundreds of thousands of Russians mobilised since last month to hold the frontlines in his country’s faltering war in Ukraine.</p> <p>On 25 September he received his call-up papers. By 7 October, just two weeks later, he was dead.</p> <p>“We don’t know what happened,” said Alexander Zelensky, the head of the Nevsky Collegium of Lawyers, of which Nikiforov was a member. Zelensky and a member of Nikiforov’s family confirmed his call-up and death. “All we have is a date and a place.”</p> <p>That place was Lysychansk, one of the most dangerous spots near the frontlines.</p> <p>The first coffins are now returning to Russia from Ukraine, bringing the remains of ordinary Russians who at first were promised a quick “special military operation” and now have been drafted to go and fight in a war. Their deaths may mark another inflection point for Russia in this conflict, where mismanagement has led to Kremlin infighting and at least half a million men have been drafted or fled their homes to avoid it.</p>

The newly minted soldiers died within weeks of Vladimir Putin's mobilisation announcement on 21 September. On Thursday, the Chelyabinsk region announced the deaths of five mobilised soldiers from a single military commissariat. Reports on Saturday said that another four had died from the Krasnoyarsk region alone. Family members of some men who died said they had [been promised two months of training](#) before they would be sent to the frontlines.

According to BBC Russian, another 14 have died, even before reaching the front, of causes including suicide, heart attacks, in fights and other mysterious ailments.

Nikiforov, by contrast, played the role asked of him by the Kremlin: loyal, willing and able. A military veteran who had served in Chechnya, he wasn't surprised to be called up.

"He didn't hesitate," said Zelensky, adding that military recruiters had delivered his call-up papers to his home. "He didn't try to get out of his service. He gathered his things together and went. He acted bravely."

Yet deaths happening so quickly, some just days after men have been called into service, have caused anger at home.

Alexei Martynov, a 28-year-old employee of the Moscow government, was mobilised on 23 September, his father said. His death was confirmed on 10 October. "My son has died, what am I for?" he wrote in a post on 13 October. "We don't know anything more than what was put on the internet," he told the Observer.

Old photographs from Victory Day in 2016 showed Martynov in army uniform, two months after completing his mandatory service. According to Natalya Loseva, the deputy editorial director of the RT television channel, he had served in the Semyonovsky regiment, whose main activities are ceremonial.

"He had no combat experience," Loseva wrote in an angry post last week that made Martynov the highest-profile death yet from the wave of mobilisation. "He was sent to the front within just a few days. He died heroically on 10 October."

Roman Super, a Russian journalist who has reported on anger among state employees, said that Martynov's death had led to a backlash among the educated cadres of city workers.

"Military leaders, now is not the time to lie," wrote Loseva. "You have no right to lie and now it is a crime."

Anger at Russia's military leadership had led to considerable infighting in the Russian government, with an insurgency led by Chechnya head Ramzan Kadyrov and the Wagner private military company founder Yevgeny Prigozhin calling out individual commanders by name for their failure to halt the Ukrainian advance.

Now, with the impact of mobilisation beginning to be felt on the home front, Putin has been forced to defend the process, telling Russians the call-ups are likely to conclude in two weeks and he will order an inquiry into violations of draft procedures.

"The line of contact is 1,100km, so it is almost impossible to hold it exclusively with troops formed from contractors," said Putin. "This is the reason for mobilisation."

At a press conference in the Kazakhstan capital of Astana on Friday, he said that 16,000 mobilised troops were already fighting in Ukraine, and that 222,000 Russians had already been called up.

He said that mobilised Russians would receive basic training of five to 10 days and then unit training of five to 15 days. Then combat training would continue, he claimed.

	<p>Yet some of the deaths clearly show that men have been shipped off to war far more quickly than that. Several Russian soldiers captured by the Ukrainians claimed that they had received almost no training whatsoever.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Russian draft officers are becoming far more aggressive. The Observer has spoken with the relative of a man in Moscow who was detained on city streets and summarily served call-up papers. In another case, an IT worker complained that his exemption from the draft was ignored and that he wasn't even allowed to say goodbye to his wife and four-month-old daughter before being sent for basic training.</p> <p>Russia's mobilisation drive has been plagued by reports of neglect, unexplained deaths and suicides. On Friday, the body of a Russian military draft officer was found hanging on a fence in the far-east town of Partizansk.</p> <p>Some of the deaths at Russia's mobilisation centres have also indicated severe issues with morale. During training, one man at a military base near St Petersburg fatally shot himself. Another in Siberia reportedly cut his own throat in a mess hall.</p> <p>The pro-government Telegram channel Mash reported on Friday that the internet censors were now investigating the pro-war bloggers and reporters who have criticised Russia's shambolic mobilisation. The channel claimed the cases were provoked by the defence ministry.</p> <p>Margarita Simonyan, the RT head who has led pro-Kremlin critics of the mistakes made during mobilisation, wrote in their defence: "According to my data, the authorities who make decisions have no issues with them."</p>
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HEADLINE	10/15 Day 234 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/15/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-234-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vladimir Putin said he believed the “partial mobilisation” of army reservists would be completed in two weeks. The Russian president said after attending a summit in Kazakhstan on Friday that a total of 222,000 reservists would be called up, down from the 300,000 figure initially circulated after the order last month. • The Belarus defence ministry said Russian troops would start arriving in the country “in the next few days” as part of its joint force. • The US and Germany are to deliver sophisticated anti-aircraft systems to Kyiv this month to counter attacks using Russian missiles and kamikaze drones, Ukraine's defence minister said. Oleksiy Reznikov said Ukraine would receive the Iris-II air defence system from Germany this month. • A Russian submarine has reportedly been spotted off the French coast and escorted by the French navy. The submarine was spotted sailing on the surface off the Brittany coast at the end of September, the French navy said on its Twitter feed. It said British and Spanish warships had also been involved in monitoring the submarine's movements. • Putin has called for the humanitarian corridors for Ukrainian grain to be closed if they are used for “acts of terror”. At a news conference in the Kazakh capital of Astana he also said there was “no need” for talks with the US president, Joe Biden. • A Ukrainian member of Kherson's regional council has condemned Russia's “evacuation” of the occupied city, saying it is in fact a “deportation”. The council member also said it was an evacuation for collaborators, urging residents to go to Ukrainian-controlled territory if they could. • The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has responded to criticism from the Ukrainian government calling for immediate access to all PoWs, saying: “We share the frustration regarding our lack of access to all prisoners of war.” Its comments came after the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, accused the ICRC of inaction in upholding the rights of Ukrainian prisoners and called on it to visit the Olenivka camp in eastern Ukraine, where dozens of Ukrainian PoWs died in an explosion and fire in July.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elon Musk’s SpaceX says it can no longer pay for critical satellite services in Ukraine, according to CNN. SpaceX is reportedly asking the US government to start paying instead. • The US will send munitions and military vehicles to Ukraine as part of a new \$725m security assistance package, the defence department said on Friday. The package is the first since Russia’s barrage of missiles fired on civilian population centres in Ukraine this week, Reuters reports, and will bring total US security assistance since Russia’s invasion to \$17.5bn. • Democrats on Capitol Hill have suggested transferring US weapons systems in Saudi Arabia to Ukraine and suspending a planned transfer of Patriot missiles to Riyadh in the wake of what they call a “turning point” in Washington’s relationship with the kingdom. • Saudi Arabia will provide \$400m in humanitarian aid to Ukraine, Saudi state news agency SPA said. It added that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman called Zelenskiy on Friday, Reuters reported. • A newly discovered hacking group has attacked transportation and logistics companies in Ukraine and Poland with a novel kind of ransomware, Microsoft said on Friday. The attackers targeted a wide range of systems within an hour on Tuesday, Microsoft said in a blog post, adding it had not been able to link the attacks to any known group yet. Notably, however, researchers found the hacks closely mirrored earlier attacks by a Russian government-linked cyber team. • Oleh Synyehubov, the governor of Kharkiv, said two 16-year-old boys were among those injured by Russian shelling in the region in the last 24 hours. • The UK Ministry of Defence said that “Russia continues to prosecute offensive operations in central Donbas and is, very slowly, making progress”. The ministry said that “in the last three days, pro-Russian forces have made tactical advances towards the centre of the town of Bakhmut in Donetsk Oblast” and “likely advanced into the villages of Opytine and Ivograd to the south of the town”.
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HEADLINE	10/15 Ukraine energy infrastructure remains intact
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/15/russia-strikes-ukraine-energy-infrastructure-zaporizhzhia-kyiv
GIST	<p>Russia has continued to try to hit Ukrainian’s energy infrastructure but Vladimir Putin’s forces did not appear to have enjoyed any significant success.</p> <p>One missile seriously damaged a key energy facility in the region around Ukraine’s capital and 10 missiles and four drones hit locations in the south-eastern city of Zaporizhzhia.</p> <p>There were periodic electricity blackouts in Kyiv but fires set off in Zaporizhzhia and subsequent damage to electricity substations did not appear to affect supply in the city.</p> <p>Evidence on the ground suggested that a number of the missiles launched at Zaporizhzhia had badly misfired, damaging only cars and smashing the windows of apartment blocks rather than disabling the critical infrastructure.</p> <p>Russia has waged a campaign to destroy Ukraine’s energy system as winter fast approaches, prompting calls in recent days from Ukraine’s government for a nationwide effort to save energy.</p> <p>The Russian forces continue, however, to be on the defensive on the frontlines, with Ukrainian forces continuing to make ground in the strategically important Kherson region.</p> <p>To the north and east of Kherson, Russian shelling killed two civilians in the Dnipropetrovsk region, according to the local governor, Valentyn Reznichenko.</p> <p>On Saturday, a British defence intelligence update suggested that Putin’s “partial mobilisation” of Russian reservists was unlikely to turn the tide.</p>

It was claimed that the new soldiers were poorly equipped and were being asked to buy their own body armour, including a 6B45 vest, which is supposed to be part of general issue.

It was suggested that part of the reason behind the Russian army's comparatively poor performance in the first seven months of the war was corruption.

The intelligence briefing said: "Endemic corruption and poor logistics remain one of the underlying causes of Russia's poor performance in Ukraine."

The first Russian soldiers to take part in a new joint force with Belarusian troops arrived in Belarus, Minsk's defence ministry said on Saturday.

"The first convoys of Russian servicemen from the regional force group have arrived in Belarus," the ministry said, adding that their mission was "exclusively to strengthen the protection and defence of the border".

Meanwhile, an oil depot in Russia's Belgorod region bordering Ukraine was said by the local governor to be on fire after being shelled on Saturday.

"We're getting bombed again. One of the shells hit the oil depot in the Belgorod region," the regional governor, Vyacheslav Gladkov, said.

Gladkov said emergency services were already on site, adding there was "no risk" of the fire spreading, as he posted a photo showing flames and plumes of black smoke rising above a building.

The state-run news agency Tass cited a source in the emergency services who said the burning depot was located in the village of Razumnoye-71, near the city of Belgorod.

The area has been regularly targeted by Ukraine. A munition depot in the region was also destroyed on Thursday. Earlier in the week, Ukrainian strikes knocked out power in the town of Shebekino, in the same region. A 74-year-old woman died and several others were wounded in the attack.

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HEADLINE	10/16 Day 235 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/16/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-235-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 11 people were killed and 15 wounded at a military training ground in south-west Russia's Belgorod region when two volunteers opened fire on other troops, the Russian defence ministry said. The shooters were nationals from a former Soviet republic and had been shot dead after Saturday's shooting, the ministry said, calling it a terrorist attack. Baza, a Russian news site with close ties to police, said the shooting occurred at 10am local time during shooting practice.• Elon Musk has announced his company SpaceX will continue to pay for Starlink satellite internet in Ukraine, a day after suggesting he could not keep funding the project. "The hell with it," the billionaire tweeted on Saturday. "Even though Starlink is still losing money & other companies are getting billions of taxpayer \$, we'll just keep funding Ukraine govt for free."• Russia has continued to try to hit Ukrainian's energy infrastructure but Vladimir Putin's forces did not appear to have enjoyed any significant success. One missile seriously damaged a key energy facility in the region around Ukraine's capital, however, and 10 missiles and four drones hit locations in the south-eastern city of Zaporizhzhia.• Ukrainian forces have repelled Russian attacks near 11 settlements, the Kyiv Independent has reported. According to the general staff of Ukraine's armed forces, Russian forces were attempting to advance near the settlements of Novosadove, Yakovlivka, Berestove, Bakhmut, Bakhmutse, Opytne, Krasnohorivka, Nevelske, Pervomaiske, Mariinka, and Pobieda.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • France will train up to 2,000 Ukrainian soldiers on its territory, France’s minister for the armed forces told Le Parisien newspaper in an interview on Saturday. Sebastien Lecornu said soldiers would “be taken into our units for several weeks”, and that France would also provide Ukraine with Crotale air defence systems, without specifying how many. • Iran has reiterated that it rejects accusations it has supplied Russia with weapons “to be used in the war in Ukraine”, its foreign ministry said. The topic is due to be discussed by EU foreign ministers in a meeting in Luxembourg on Monday. In a statement, the Iranian foreign minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, “emphasised that the Islamic republic of Iran has not and will not provide any weapon to be used in the war in Ukraine”. • Ukraine’s Ministry of Defence has revealed the identity of the “Ghost of Vinnitsia” who had replaced the “Ghost of Kyiv”, which turned out to be propaganda. The pilot, named as Vadym, has been Ukraine’s poster fighter in the past few weeks after multiple reports of Russian losses in Ukrainian skies. • A fuel depot in Russia’s Belgorod region, which borders Ukraine, caught fire after shelling on Saturday, its governor said, without specifying the shelling’s origin. • The Russian foreign ministry has confirmed the re-equipping of Belarusian Su-25 aircraft to carry nuclear weapons, according to the Belarusian Hajun project. • Ukrainian troops have launched an offensive in Kherson oblast, the Kyiv Independent reported, while it has not been confirmed by Ukraine. • Dane Partridge, a 34-year-old man from Idaho who fought as a volunteer soldier in Ukraine, died on Tuesday from injuries sustained during a Russian attack in Luhansk, AP reported.
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HEADLINE	10/15 Putin moves to solidify Ukraine annexations
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/15/world/europe/putin-annexations-ukraine-nuclear.html
GIST	<p>Ten days after President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia declared the annexation of four Ukrainian provinces, his government is stepping up efforts to bind those territories more tightly to Moscow.</p> <p>Workers at Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia nuclear facility, which Russian forces control, are being pressured to sign contracts with the Russian nuclear energy company, in defiance of Kyiv, a United Nations official said. And pro-Russian authorities in the southern Ukrainian province of Kherson said on Saturday that they had set up a hotline for civilians seeking to leave the contested area — but only if they wanted to go to Russia.</p> <p>The Russian moves showed that despite failing to gain momentum on the battlefield with widespread bombardments of Ukrainian cities and towns over the past week, Mr. Putin intends to shrug off international condemnation and press ahead with efforts to link the occupied provinces to the Russian state.</p> <p>Mr. Putin signed far-reaching legislation on Oct. 5 to formalize the annexation, despite the fact that his forces did not actually control all of the territory, a move that was widely condemned as a violation of international law. Now, Russia is taking preliminary steps to cement the annexation with facts on the ground.</p> <p>At the Zaporizhzhia nuclear facility, Ukrainian engineers who have continued to operate the plant under the watch of Russian soldiers managed to restore power to the facility late Friday, reducing worries about an accident at one of the war’s most sensitive sites.</p> <p>Rafael Mariano Grossi, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said in a statement that the plant’s employees had come under “unacceptable pressure” to sign contracts with the state-owned Russian nuclear energy company, Rosatom, which would flip their allegiance from Ukraine to Russia.</p> <p>That pressure adds to the stresses on the workers that Ukrainian officials have been warning about for months; they say that Russian soldiers have subjected the already fatigued staff to harsh interrogations and torture.</p>

Holding the plant gives Moscow a military advantage as well as significant leverage over Ukraine's energy infrastructure. The Russian authorities could also, in theory, connect the facility to their own grid, funneling power south to Ukrainian territory it seized.

Despite Russia's claims that it has nationalized the plant, the International Atomic Energy Agency views the plant as Ukrainian, since the U.N. charter does not recognize illegal annexations, the agency said.

In what Mr. Grossi called a "much-needed development," the plant's engineers managed to restore backup power, ending the plant's reliance on diesel generators. Most nuclear power plants consider diesel generators a last line of defense to be used only in extreme circumstances.

The Zaporizhzhia plant is not providing electricity to Ukraine's grid, given that its reactors are shut down, but it needs its own power source for safety reasons.

Mr. Grossi said that efforts to restart one of the reactors would begin on Saturday in a process that would take several days.

In the southern Ukrainian province of Kherson, which Moscow now considers part of Russia, the pro-Russian authorities announced the creation of a hotline on Saturday for residents seeking to evacuate the contested area, building on days of calls by Russian proxy leaders for civilians to leave. The Ukrainian government considers those proxy leaders traitors.

The deputy head of the pro-Russian administration in the region, Kirill Stremousov, said in a post on Telegram that to "avoid casualties" among the civilian population, the local administration "strongly recommends taking the opportunity of a humanitarian trip for recreation and recovery to the Russian Federation."

The post listed a hotline number with a Russian country code for organizing such trips.

Russia's deputy prime minister, Marat Khusnullin, said on Saturday that several thousand children had left the region and were now "resting in children's camps."

It was not immediately possible to reach the number or to verify whether Russia had helped civilians leave the province.

Many civilians have fled Kherson on their own in recent weeks, often for territory controlled by Ukraine.

Still reckoning with the fallout from its decision to agree with other oil producing states to cut oil output, a move that Washington criticized as helping Russia, Saudi Arabia announced on Friday that it would provide \$400 million in humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

The cuts announced this month by the group of oil producing companies known as OPEC Plus angered President Biden, who has vowed to reassess the United States' relationship with the kingdom, and U.S. lawmakers, some of whom have called for more drastic action, like halting arms sales. The United States said that the cuts could push up oil prices, adding cash to Russia's war chest and undermining efforts by the U.S. and Europe to isolate Moscow.

The cuts also weaken efforts to limit Moscow's income from oil sales and could add to surging inflation in the West.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, spoke with President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine on Friday and offered the aid to "alleviate the human suffering of the Ukrainian people," according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

Mr. Zelensky wrote on Twitter that Saudi Arabia would provide financial aid to Ukraine, but he did not specify the amount or the timing.

	<p>President Biden responded on Friday to Russia’s latest bombardment of civilian population centers in Ukraine by authorizing another \$725 million in weapons and military equipment for Kyiv, bringing the total of American security assistance to Ukraine to \$17.6 billion since the war began.</p> <p>The Pentagon said in a statement that the package would include munitions and military vehicles. The State Department said it would also include military education and training.</p> <p>It will not, a Pentagon official said, include much in the way of new capabilities to defend against Russian strikes from the air, though that may come soon. Western officials have been under pressure to speed up the delivery of air defense systems to Ukraine since a barrage of Russian missiles battered cities across the country this week.</p> <p>Instead, the aid will be directed primarily to restocking ammunition for weapons systems that Ukrainian troops have been using successfully in their counteroffensive, such as the High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS.</p> <p>Mr. Zelensky said early Saturday that he was “sincerely grateful” to Mr. Biden for the new package. “We will receive, in particular, much-needed rounds for HIMARS and artillery,” the Ukrainian leader wrote on Twitter.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/15 People slow to get Covid booster shots
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/15/us/politics/covid-booster-shots.html
GIST	<p>BALTIMORE — The new coronavirus booster shots have found a modest number of takers at one of this city’s few remaining public vaccination sites, with nine doses given on one recent day and 15 on another.</p> <p>More than a month after the retooled shots were rolled out, only about 5 percent of Baltimore residents have received one, a figure that reflects the slow uptake nationally. In a city with stark health disparities, local officials see a reason to be worried.</p> <p>“The fact that we’ve been getting it so often is making it uninteresting to people,” Rebecca Dineen, the city’s Covid-19 vaccine coordinator, said of the rounds of coronavirus shots.</p> <p>The anemic turnout underscores yet another test of the Biden administration’s pandemic strategy, as federal and local officials contend with dwindling public patience and diminishing funds for the virus response.</p> <p>Only about 15 million doses of the new shots have been administered nationally since their introduction at the beginning of September, representing less than one in 10 people who are eligible, and there are signs that many Americans are unaware of or simply uninterested in them. In a Kaiser Family Foundation survey last month, half of adults said they had heard little or nothing about the shots.</p> <p>Once defined by supply shortages and mass vaccination sites, the nation’s ever-expanding inoculation campaign has lately been characterized by apathy, with potentially serious health consequences for the most vulnerable Americans should another Covid wave sweep the country this winter.</p> <p>The tepid response to the shots, public health experts say, is more than just a marketing dilemma. Many Americans have recently had a coronavirus infection, drawing out the timeline for when they might seek another booster or causing them to skip one altogether. Others are wary of continual boosting or side effects that might keep them from going to school or work.</p> <p>The turnout for the new shots, for which children as young as 5 became eligible this week, could fall far short of the response to the initial booster campaign that the federal government undertook around a year ago, when administration officials say there was less fatigue around vaccination and the pandemic more</p>

broadly. Around 110 million people received at least one dose of the original booster formulation before the new shots were authorized [at the end of August](#).

Dr. Ashish K. Jha, the White House Covid-19 coordinator, said in an interview that the early turnout for the updated boosters amounted to a “good start” and that uptake was likely to steadily increase this fall. Many Americans, he said, were treating the new vaccines like flu shots, considering receiving one as the weather turned colder.

“We did not have an internal number in our heads, or at least I didn’t have one in mind, of what we were going to achieve,” Dr. Jha said. “My kind of mental model was that it would really start ramping up once we got into October.”

Administration officials made an expensive bet on the new campaign at [a fraught moment](#) in congressional funding negotiations, buying over 170 million doses with billions [in repurposed funds](#) — enough to vaccinate most of the roughly 225 million Americans who have had an initial round of vaccination.

One senior official said the purchase was modeled on how the federal government typically buys flu vaccines, with enough doses to reach any American at tens of thousands of sites while limiting how many go to waste. Around 80 percent of doses in recent weeks were given at retail pharmacies, Dr. Jha said, an increase from earlier Covid-19 vaccination campaigns.

While many Americans still have substantial protection from past vaccinations and infections, federal officials have pointed to analyses that show the new boosters could still [save thousands of lives](#). Vaccine experts say they expect the shots to deliver an initial burst of antibodies and a broadened immune response. The Covid vaccines were redesigned to target Omicron subvariants on the assumption that more current formulations would provide better and more durable protection.

Yet researchers are still working to determine how well the shots protect people and how long those defenses last. The data that federal regulators gathered from the manufacturers of the boosters, Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, is still preliminary, leaving experts to speculate about the additional benefits the new vaccines may offer, including its influence on transmission or longer-lasting symptoms of Covid-19.

Federal officials are not expected to have early data from Pfizer and Moderna on what kind of short-term antibody responses the new vaccines induced in trial participants until later this fall.

Health officials and providers already know whom they need to reach with the new shots, as Americans over 75 have represented a majority of deaths from Covid-19 in recent months. Around half of those vaccinated with the new boosters so far are seniors, Dr. Jha said.

White House officials say they have tried to publicize the new shots with federal ad campaigns, clinics at state and county fairs and partnerships with local leaders. The administration is targeting older Americans with outreach from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, while the White House is working with CVS and Walgreens to increase booster awareness, Dr. Jha said.

“When you walk into CVS, you see signs for the flu shot,” he said, adding, “We want to make sure that that is getting tied into their outreach on Covid-19 vaccines as well.”

Dr. Swati Gaur, the medical director for two long-term care facilities in Georgia, said the challenge had shifted from getting a supply of vaccine doses to waging a piecemeal persuasion campaign to coax seniors into taking them.

In one recent encounter, she said, she spoke with a resident at one of her facilities who had grown tired of getting vaccinated against the virus after four shots and refused a fifth. She walked him through the potential benefits, and he agreed to get the shot.

Dr. Gaur said it was critical that employees at long-term care facilities calling families and asking for consent to vaccinate knew how to have similar conversations.

Biden administration officials have offered sometimes competing ideas of the urgency of the booster campaign for younger, healthier people. Federal regulators scrambled to make the updated shots available ahead of schedule late in the summer, opting for that approach instead of offering second booster doses of the original vaccine formulation to all adults. With case counts lower, some top officials have recently offered a more relaxed timeline, turning to an October theme.

Dr. Jha encouraged Americans to get the new shots by Halloween so their immunity would be bolstered by Thanksgiving. “What we’ve been trying to do is give advice that simplifies it,” he said, adding, “The idea is that you don’t have to sort of think too hard about are you eligible or are you not eligible.”

Some experts have warned that attempts to simplify messaging could backfire.

Dr. Walid F. Gellad, a drug safety expert at the University of Pittsburgh, said that efforts to reach all age groups had diluted attention to those who most need enhanced protection. When experts over the past year have questioned whether younger, healthier Americans need boosting, he said, “to those listening only halfheartedly, it will just sound like criticism of the booster, even though it was criticism of the booster in those age groups.”

With the new shots, more Americans are making guesswork out of the timing. Acting on expert advice, some of those who have recently had the virus are waiting three or more months to get boosted, while others are timing the shot for the holidays or travel, or another uptick in cases.

Amanda First, 32, a lawyer in New York, said that after having a mild case of Covid in July, she was not in a hurry to get the next vaccine dose. But she got one of the new boosters this month so that she would have more protection when spending time with family during the holidays.

“I’m cautiously optimistic it will provide me protection,” she said of the new shot. “But I wouldn’t be surprised if I’m reinfected.”

Munro Wood, a 33-year-old web developer near St. Louis, said he received his first booster in June but had grown tired of the idea of regular Covid-19 shots. He was still undecided on whether to get the new dose.

“Annual or even biannual boosters are uncomfortable enough that they don’t overcome the risk-reward threshold for me,” he said, adding, “If another, much worse variant comes out and starts spreading as rapidly as the initial Omicron wave, I’ll probably perk up and pay more attention.”

Baltimore’s initial vaccine rollout included extensive advertising and grass-roots work, and three-quarters of residents have now received at least one vaccine dose.

Ms. Dineen, the city’s Covid-19 vaccine coordinator, said that city officials were still prioritizing getting first and second doses to vulnerable people in poorly vaccinated neighborhoods, where canvassers continue to go door-to-door with the shots.

Those at the city clinic one day this month were the vaccine-dedicated. “It’s something that needed to be done,” Melvin Battle, a city employee, said, noting that “winter’s coming along.”

Paula Ladson-Gillis, another city employee, said she knew a dose of one of the new vaccines might not prevent her from getting Covid-19, but it would at least help to keep her from getting very ill.

“I know plenty of people are relaxed — I’m not one of them,” Ms. Ladson-Gillis said. “And that even says more to me why I want to get it, because too many people are not getting it.”

HEADLINE	10/15 Fire erupts at Iran most notorious prison
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/15/world/middleeast/iran-evin-prison-fire.html
GIST	<p>A massive fire broke out on Saturday at Evin prison, the notorious detention facility in Iran's capital where hundreds of dissidents and political prisoners are held, as anti-regime protests roiled the country for a fifth week. As the fire raged, the sounds of explosions and gunfire could be heard in the neighborhood near the prison, according to witnesses and videos posted to social media.</p> <p>IRNA, the state news agency, reported that eight people had been injured in the fire, which it said started during clashes in a wing of the prison that housed those convicted of financial crimes.</p> <p>Four "massive explosions" were heard after IRNA reported that the fire had been extinguished, according to Fars News Agency, an official outfit affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards.</p> <p>It is unclear how the fire began or the extent of the damage. Contradictory reports on social media cited an explosive device, an attempted escape and an infiltration of the prison from the outside.</p> <p>Among the thousands of prisoners at Evin are hundreds of dissidents, including prominent opposition politicians, activists, lawyers, journalists, environmentalists and students. The prison, which was built in Tehran seven years before the 1979 Islamic Revolution that supplanted the country's monarchy with a theocratic republic, was the subject of American sanctions for what the United States government described as "serious human rights abuses."</p> <p>Sections of the facility are run by Iran's intelligence services and Revolutionary Guard Corp, and it is infamous for accusations of torture and a potent symbol of the regime's authoritarian approach to justice.</p> <p>Among those held at the prison are two American businessmen, Siamak Namazi and Emad Sharghi. Both men are dual Iranian nationals who have been accused of spying. Also imprisoned there are the reformist politicians Mostafa Tajzadeh and Faezeh Hashemi, as well as the prominent human rights activist Narges Mohammadi, and Jafar Panahi, an internationally renowned film director.</p> <p>Ned Price, a spokesman for the U.S. State Department, said on Twitter that "Iran is fully responsible for the safety of our wrongfully detained citizens, who should be released immediately."</p> <p>The prison sits on a hilltop at the foot of the Alborz Mountains, which surround Tehran. The compound is surrounded by electric barbed-wire fences and a minefield. Around the prison is the Evin District, a leafy upscale residential neighborhood known for its gardens and villas.</p> <p>A resident of the district, whose home abuts the prison, said she could see several buildings in the prison compound on fire and that she had heard screams coming from inside. Speaking on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal, she said she had heard gunshots beginning at 10 a.m. on Saturday. By 9 p.m., she said, she could hear the sounds of automatic gunfire, followed by enormous explosions.</p> <p>The woman said the windows of many nearby homes had been shattered by the blasts and that locals could be heard shouting "death to the dictator."</p> <p>Well into the early hours of Sunday morning, and after the fires had been reportedly extinguished, residents continued to report hearing additional blasts.</p> <p>Internet and telephone communications have been severely disrupted in Iran since anti-government protests erupted last month. On Saturday, the judiciary ordered telecom companies to ban text-messaging services, further limiting the ability of Iranians to communicate.</p> <p>Saturday's conflagration, the first at the prison in recent memory, occurred against the backdrop of nationwide protests that began in September after Mahsa Amini, 22, died while in the custody of the</p>

morality police. Ms. Amini was accused of improperly wearing a required head scarf, a violation of the law in the Islamic Republic.

Iranians, already on edge after more than a month of protests, said the fire at the prison had only increased their anxieties. The families of detainees said they feared not only for the safety of their loved ones, but also for themselves.

Human rights activists and organizations also expressed concern about the safety of the prisoners.

“Prisoners, including countless political prisoners, are completely defenseless inside that prison,” Hadi Ghaemi, the executive director of the Center for Human Rights in Iran, said in a statement.

Speaking on Saturday, in a live chat on the social media app Clubhouse, Yasser Hashemi Rafsanjani, the youngest son of the former president, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, said: “Unfortunately, we are seeing the state — despite its claim that it has security under control, if not the economy and other things — is not fully capable of managing it.”

Both Mr. Hashemi Rafsanjani’s sister Faezeh and his brother Mehdi are imprisoned at Evin.

Hundreds of officers from different branches of the military and security forces, including the Basij, a feared plainclothes militia, were deployed to the prison. Residents of the Evin neighborhood said the air around the prison was thick with ash, smoke and tear gas.

“It felt like we were watching a war movie,” said Amirdaryoush Youhaei, a 22-year-old university student who lives in the neighborhood. “There was a massive siren and then 11 big explosions and machine gunfire that didn’t stop.”

On Saturday, protests continued in Tehran and other cities across the country, with crowds chanting “death to the dictator.” In videos posted on social media, security forces were seen violently beating and arresting protesters. In the northwest city of Ardabil, protesters clashed with security officers after reports that officers had raided a high school on Friday and had beaten students. Ten students were reportedly hospitalized, and one student is believed to have died, according to a statement from Iran’s Union of Educators.

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HEADLINE	10/15 Another Covid wave could be coming
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/15/well/covid-holiday-plans.html
GIST	<p>At this stage in the long slog of the pandemic, many of us are forgoing masks in places we previously wore them and getting together indoors when we had formerly avoided it. But the holidays throw new variables at everyone’s risk calculus. People trek across the country to see each other. Families crowd around dinner tables, with older, more vulnerable people sitting beside their younger relatives.</p> <p>As we enter our third pandemic holiday season, some doctors are fearing a seasonal surge in Covid. In Europe — which many experts consider a bellwether for Covid cases in the U.S. — cases are starting to mount, prompting the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and the World Health Organization to warn that a new wave of infections could be starting.</p> <p>“This is the holiday that everyone’s going to come back together again,” said Dr. Peter Chin-Hong, an infectious disease specialist at the University of California, San Francisco. With a bit of advanced planning, he said, family gatherings can be safe this year, and resemble something like pre-pandemic times. “We have the tools for a normal life,” he said. “We just have to use them.”</p> <p>Here’s what to keep in mind as you map out your family’s plans for the holidays.</p> <p>Plan around the highest-risk member of your family.</p>

Individual risk tolerance may vary among your family members, but in general, plan around the person at your gathering who is highest-risk. That means taking more precautions if you have a family member who is older than 60, on immunosuppressant medications, received a transplant, or is a cancer patient, said Dr. Michelle Prickett, pulmonary and critical care specialist at Northwestern Medicine.

“It requires everyone who’s going to these gatherings to buy into the idea that we’re going to do the best to protect each other,” said Dr. Adam Ratner, a pediatric infectious disease specialist at N.Y.U. Langone.

You should talk with your family members ahead of time before gathering and figure out your game plan. Ask if people are up-to-date on their vaccinations, and encourage people to take additional precautions if a high-risk family member is attending, which could include limiting the amount of people you invite to Thanksgiving dinner or investing in a few heat lamps so that you can move the meal outside. “This is something you can manage,” Dr. Prickett said. “But you can’t put your head in the sand.”

Get the new booster.

“The biggest way to protect yourself and others is to stay on top of your shots,” said Dr. Joseph Khabbaza, a pulmonary medicine doctor at Cleveland Clinic. The new [bivalent booster](#) is a critical tool for warding off infection — although many people are [not even aware](#) that it is available. You can find the new booster at pharmacies and health centers across the country, and anyone 5 and older can currently receive it. (You can get your booster at [the same time](#) as your flu shot.)

Dr. Ashish Jha, the White House coronavirus response coordinator, has [urged people](#) to get the new booster by Halloween, so that it kicks in before Thanksgiving gatherings. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the shot for people who are at least two months out from their last infection or vaccination, but [many doctors](#) say you should wait at least three months — even if you’re trying to maximize protection before a family gathering. If you get a new shot too soon after recovering from Covid, “your antibodies are just going to chomp up that booster,” and it won’t necessarily raise your level of protection, Dr. Chin-Hong said.

Pay attention to your symptoms.

In the days leading up to a family event — and especially the morning of — watch out for [Covid symptoms](#): sore throat, congestion, coughing, fatigue, headaches and muscle pain. People infected with BA.5, the dominant variant of Covid, are less likely to report losing their sense of taste and smell, but those are also crucial symptoms to watch for.

The dominant variant currently has a shorter incubation period — which means if you go to a packed bar on a Friday night and don’t have symptoms by Monday, it’s unlikely you have the virus, Dr. Chin-Hong said. If you still don’t have symptoms by Wednesday, you’re probably in the clear, he said, although you should take a test to confirm.

However, it is still possible to have an asymptomatic case of Covid — and as more people build up immunity to the virus through vaccination and prior infection, asymptomatic, or very mild, cases will be more common, said Dr. Céline Gounder, an infectious disease specialist and senior fellow and editor at large for public health at Kaiser Health News. Even if you do not have symptoms, you can still spread the virus, she said, which makes it important to test right before gathering with a vulnerable person.

“If you’re going to sit down with Grandma for Thanksgiving dinner, I would test immediately before,” she said.

If you do feel sick, stay home — even if you’re negative on a rapid test. “Anyone who isn’t feeling well should stay home,” Dr. Ratner said, “because the tests aren’t perfect.”

Test wisely.

The question isn’t whether or not to test before a family gathering; it’s when to test, and how many times. Experts differ on the exact timing and combination of tests you should take, but for the most accurate measure of whether or not you’re contagious before an event, take an at-home rapid test right before. “You

can just have a little testing party outside, where everyone says, ‘OK, now we’re good, we’re negative, we can go in and see Mom,’” said Stuart Ray, an infectious diseases specialist at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. You should also take a rapid test the day before, he advised.

“Rapid tests are very good, but they’re not perfect,” Dr. Pritchett said. P.C.R. tests are more sensitive, but it can take several days to get the results back, she said, and so a five-day-old snapshot of your infection status won’t be helpful in determining if you’re contagious at the moment. If you can get a quick-turnaround P.C.R., that can boost your confidence that you’re negative; if not, take at least two rapid tests, 12 to 24 hours apart. (If you have had Covid in the last two to three months, though, P.C.R.s can stay positive beyond the point at which you’re contagious, Dr. Ratner said, so you should rely on rapid tests.)

And think about if the test makes sense to you, Dr. Ratner said. If you’ve been masking and limiting your contact and do not have symptoms, a negative test seems logical. If you wake up with a scratchy throat and have interacted with someone who tested positive, though, take another test the following day, and consider staying home even if the tests are negative, depending on how risky you deem yourself to be.

Consider a “mini quarantine.”

You might want to minimize your exposure in the week before heading home for the holidays, Dr. Prickett said. That means wearing a mask in public indoor spaces and also limiting the time you spend around crowds — like timing trips to the grocery store for when it isn’t super packed, she said.

This is especially important if you live in an area with high levels of Covid cases. You want to [check case counts](#) like a weather report, Dr. Chin-Hong said — and keep in mind that these offer an incomplete picture, since rates of testing have plummeted.

Of course, total isolation isn’t feasible for many people. But the level of risk you encounter in a workplace, for example, where you can potentially wear a mask and may interact only with a set group of people, is likely lower than in environments like a restaurant or bar, Dr. Ray said.

Mask up while you travel.

While your risk may change slightly depending on which mode of transportation you take, Dr. Gounder didn’t recommend prioritizing one form of travel over another. But whether you’re taking a plane, bus or train, make sure to wear a mask.

Even if you’re the only person on a plane or train wearing one, a high-quality mask can still protect you, doctors said. “It’s way, way better than nothing,” Dr. Ratner said, “and way, way worse than if everyone was masked.” He recommends people use an [N95, KN95 or KF94](#) mask, and that they keep it on for the entire trip, or take it off for as short a time as possible. You might want to fill up on a big meal before your journey, so you don’t have to take off your mask to eat.

“If you really wear it carefully, if you cinch it down, it’s very unlikely that this virus is going to make it through this mask,” Dr. Ray said.

Ventilate your space.

If you can’t hold your event outside, you can still increase air circulation and reduce the risk of trapping and transmitting the virus in a tight indoor space. Even cracking open the windows can improve air flow. You can also purchase portable air purifiers with HEPA filters. These devices can be expensive ([Wirecutter recommends one](#) that retails for just under \$200), but they can effectively capture some virus particles in the air.

Experts acknowledged that these precautions can be exhausting, but stressed that advance planning can help us protect each other over the holidays.

“I do not think it’s going to be like this forever,” Dr. Ratner said. “But we’re still in this.”

HEADLINE	10/16 China doubles-down 'zero Covid' policy
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/16/world/asia/china-is-sticking-to-its-zero-covid-policy.html
GIST	<p>Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Sunday dashed any hopes that the “zero Covid” policy — which attempts to eliminate coronavirus infections with costly lockdowns — would end in the coming months.</p> <p>Mr. Xi argued that the Communist Party had waged an “all out people’s war to stop the spread of the virus.” China’s leadership had done everything it could to protect people’s health, he said, putting “the people and their lives above all else.” He made no mention of how the stringent measures are holding back economic growth and frustrating residents.</p> <p>Mr. Xi emphasized that “zero Covid” has saved lives. To abandon it, he seemed to suggest, would be to disregard human life.</p> <p>The message — delivered by Mr. Xi at the party congress — reinforced a flurry of recent propaganda published by state media earlier this week to counter mounting speculation that China might loosen its tough pandemic restrictions after the gathering.</p> <p>To the rest of the world, where more effective vaccines and treatment have lessened the death toll from Covid-19, China’s approach no longer makes sense.</p> <p>But China is still trying to contain the virus even as it becomes increasingly hard to do, guided by a prevailing thought that loosening up would be too dangerous for vulnerable citizens like the elderly and would overwhelm its fragile hospital system.</p> <p>Mr. Xi on Sunday also repeated a common refrain that China has won international acclaim for its go-it-alone approach to Covid, bolstering its influence on the international stage.</p> <p>This claim was true early on in the pandemic, when China was lauded for using widespread lockdowns to stop the spread of the virus, said Yanzhong Huang, a global health expert at the Council on Foreign Relations. By 2021 the city of Wuhan, the epicenter of the new coronavirus just a year earlier, offered the rest of the world a glimpse of a post-pandemic world as residents went on with their lives while other countries were battling devastating outbreaks.</p> <p>But as a more infectious Omicron variant broke through China’s zero Covid fortress earlier this year, officials have had to enforce increasingly stringent measures to fulfill its ongoing goal to keeping the virus out. The approach has left China isolated from the world and taken a grim toll on its economy.</p> <p>“International reverence for Beijing’s Covid response approach has rapidly and significantly decreased, which has undermined China’s soft power, especially in the Western world,” said Mr. Huang.</p> <p>There is also growing evidence at home that people’s patience for China’s approach to fighting Covid is waning. A nationwide mass testing requirement that was supposed to ease the pressure is not working as officials have rushed to lock down more and more cities.</p> <p>Beyond the economy, experts have questioned how Mr. Xi will pivot away from a policy that has dominated the lives of 1.4 billion people for nearly three years.</p> <p>“There is nothing positive or aspirational about zero Covid,” said Jude Blanchette, a China expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.</p> <p>Instead, it’s a sword of Damocles that hangs over everyone’s head, Mr. Blanchette said, adding, “you know you’re just a few cases away from a lockdown.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 China warns against Taiwan interference
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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/16/world/asia/on-taiwan-xi-jinping-warns-against-international-interference.html
GIST	<p>TAIPEI, Taiwan — Xi Jinping’s speech on Sunday broke little new ground on the question of Taiwan but struck a sharper tone, warning the world that China, and China alone, would decide how and when to bring about unification.</p> <p>Referring to Taiwan earlier in his speech than he did five years ago — a sign of it taking on more importance, analysts said — Mr. Xi stressed that China would “continue to strive for peaceful reunification,” but he also said that China reserved the right to use force and “all measures necessary.”</p> <p>“This is directed solely at interference by outside forces and a few separatists seeking Taiwan independence,” he said.</p> <p>Declaring a firm line on Taiwan, Mr. Xi drew one of the speech’s longest stretches of applause from delegates in the room. The focus on external forces signaled growing recognition by China that Taiwan has become more of a priority for the United States, as well as for an increasing number of countries around the world.</p> <p>“International forces have turned the Taiwan issue into an international affair, which China has always been reluctant to admit in the past,” said Chen Chien-fu, a professor at the Graduate Institute of China Studies at Tamkang University in New Taipei City. “It has always felt that the Taiwan Strait issue is China’s internal affair and internal issue, but now it has become an entire international issue.”</p> <p>Several analysts interpreted the speech’s Taiwan section as an incremental follow-up to a white paper that the Chinese government published after Nancy Pelosi, the U.S. House speaker, visited Taiwan in August. After her trip, the Chinese Communist Party also conducted military exercises and intensified dispatches of military aircraft and ships near Taiwan, making clear that it reserved the right both to invade, and to engage in activities that would essentially cut the islands of Taiwan off from the world.</p> <p>A partial or full blockade could force Taiwan into blackouts and an economic halt. All options, Mr. Xi suggested, could be deployed against Taiwan, the self-ruled island that China claims as its territory.</p> <p>“This lack of substantive commitment to specific policy approaches or instruments signals that China is still exerting what Xi also uses in the speech — ‘strategic patience,’” said Wen-ti Sung, a political scientist in the Taiwan Studies Program at the Australian National University. “They want to preserve policy flexibility.”</p> <p>In response to Mr. Xi, Taiwan reiterated that it was a sovereign, independent country dedicated to democracy.</p> <p>“The mainstream public opinion in Taiwan also clearly expresses that we firmly reject ‘one country, two systems,’” Chang Tun-han, a spokesman for Taiwan’s presidency, said in a statement. “Taiwan’s position is very firm.”</p> <p>But in what Mr. Xi said in his speech, or rather in what he did not say, there were hints of less tolerance for autonomy of any kind.</p> <p>Alexander Huang, a top official with Taiwan’s Kuomintang, the political party that is friendlier to China than the Democratic Progressive Party currently in government, noted that Mr. Xi did not use the phrase “one country, two systems” in his references to Taiwan. It was in the written text of the work report, but not in his delivered remarks regarding Taiwan.</p> <p>“It shows China wants to have more dominance, and more initiative in their own hands,” Mr. Huang said, adding: “It shows more self confidence in their tone.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 France pledges to train Ukraine troops
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/16/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#france-pledges-to-train-up-to-2000-ukrainian-soldiers-and-offers-air-defense-missile-system
GIST	<p>PARIS — The defense minister Sébastien Lecornu announced on Saturday that France would train up to 2,000 Ukrainian soldiers for several weeks.</p> <p>It is a significant move for a country that has largely avoided training assistance and is evidence of President Emmanuel Macron’s stronger commitment to helping Ukraine defeat Russia.</p> <p>“This is a very important step, responding to one of Ukraine’s main demands,” Mr. Lecornu told Le Parisien in an interview published on Saturday.</p> <p>Mr. Lecornu said the training will include general combat, logistics and the use of weapons supplied by France. He added that France would provide Ukraine with Crotale air defense missile systems, which he said would be “particularly useful in the fight against drones and air bombings.”</p> <p>France owns 12 air defense missile systems. Mr. Lecornu did not say how many would be delivered to Ukraine, but added that the goal was to complete their transfer within two months.</p> <p>The announcement seemed intended to respond to mounting criticism that France was lagging behind its European neighbors in sending military aid to Ukraine. In a televised interview on Wednesday, Mr. Macron acknowledged that his country was “unable to deliver as much as the Ukrainians ask for.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Russian soldiers open fire at training camp
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/16/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#two-russian-soldiers-opened-fire-on-their-comrades-killing-15-state-news-agencies-say
GIST	<p>Two men opened fire on Russian soldiers at a training camp in the Belgorod region on Saturday, killing 11 and wounding 15, before being killed themselves, according to Russian state-run news outlets.</p> <p>The Russian Defense Ministry called the episode a terrorist attack, according to the state media outlets RIA Novosti and TASS, which quoted a ministry statement.</p> <p>The account of the shootings could not be verified independently.</p> <p>The statement from the ministry said the two men were from an ex-Soviet nation and had fired on other soldiers during target practice at a firing range, RIA Novosti reported.</p> <p>It was not immediately clear if the attackers were volunteer soldiers themselves involved in the training. Earlier reports suggested they were volunteers.</p> <p>Law enforcement representatives are working on site, the statement said.</p> <p>The shootings come after President Vladimir V. Putin announced a large mobilization last month to shore up his faltering war effort in Ukraine, where the Ukrainian army has been recapturing territory in the east and south occupied by Russia.</p> <p>Mr. Putin has said at least 220,000 reservists have been called up. At least 16,000 of them have been deployed “in units that get involved in fulfilling combat tasks,” Mr. Putin told a news conference in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Friday, adding that he expected the mobilization to be completed within two weeks.</p> <p>The Russian media has reported at least seven deaths among people who were recently drafted. Asked on Friday why some servicemen had died so soon after mobilization began, Mr. Putin said that in some cases training could take just 10 days.</p>

In late September, [Mr. Putin acknowledged](#) that there had been “mistakes” in how the Russian government had been carrying out his draft. He described cases of people entitled to deferments being wrongly drafted, such as fathers of many children, men with chronic diseases or those above military age.

The Russian news reports did not specify which former Soviet state the shooters came from; the Russian Army allows some foreigners to serve under contract, which can give them [a pathway to citizenship](#).

Inside Russia, Mr. Putin’s [draft has run into growing resistance](#) after it appeared to be hitting minority groups and rural areas harder than the big cities.

Interviews last month with people in three regions in Russia’s predominantly Muslim Caucasus Mountains suggested widespread fear of mobilization. In Chechnya, a small-business owner described seeing few men on the streets of Grozny, the capital, and said a mosque that was typically overflowing on Fridays was one-third empty.

In Kabardino-Balkaria, a local activist reported that one village of 2,500 had seen 38 people drafted, and that there was talk of young men injuring themselves to avoid conscription. But few people were protesting, he said, because civic life had been virtually liquidated.

And in Ingushetia, a Russian Army officer said he was trying to avoid going to Ukraine.

“People are close to panic,” he said. “The police are stopping cars and handing over draft notices.”

All spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution.

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HEADLINE	10/15 Record flooding southern Australia
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/10/15/australia-record-flooding-man-dead-victoria/4951665854238/
GIST	<p>Oct. 15 (UPI) -- The Australian government warned Saturday that "record" flooding is ahead for parts of the country even as residents in the states of Victoria and Tasmania dug out from earlier damage.</p> <p>At least one man has died so far amid the worst flooding to hit parts of Australia in more than a decade.</p> <p>Areas in the southern state of Victoria as well as parts of northern Tasmania are being warned of "record flood levels" with evacuation orders in place, the government said in its latest update issued on Saturday morning.</p> <p>This comes after a 71-year-old man was found dead in his flooded backyard in the city of Rochester in northern Victoria. The man's wife was trapped inside the home and had to be rescued.</p> <p>The warnings come as Melbourne and parts of are beginning to dig out of the mud caused by flood levels eclipsing those seen in January 2011, filling streets and isolating homes and businesses. While a rain respite is allowing water to recede in some areas, others are being told to prepare for more flooding with further torrential downpours looming.</p> <p>"Rainfall has eased across Central West and South West New South Wales. However, ongoing minor to major flooding continues through inland NSW," meteorologists said in the latest update. "Major flood warnings are current for Namoi, Macquarie, Bogan, Lachlan, Murrumbidgee, Murray, Culgoa and Barwon Darling Rivers."</p> <p>"A trough and low pressure system will move through NSW mid to late next week bringing further rainfall. A new flood watch will likely be issued for this system early next week," they added.</p>

	<p>Thousands of residents are currently under those major flood warnings.</p> <p>People living or working along rivers and streams are being told to monitor the latest weather forecasts and warnings and be ready to move to higher ground should flooding develop.</p> <p>Catchment basins are saturated and most of the area's dams are at or near capacity.</p> <p>In some areas, authorities have said it's no longer safe to leave. Floodwaters are still rising in the city of Shepparton, located in the floodplain of the Goulburn River in northern Victoria, prompting officials to declare that evacuation there is no longer feasible. The city is expected to see floodwaters peak on Tuesday.</p> <p>Meanwhile, residents in the neighboring town of Mooroopna were told to expect power losses if water reaches the towns' substations. Water levels in the nearby Castle Creek were expected to hit 23.6 feet (7.2 meters) by Sunday morning.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/15 Women solidarity protests in Iran escalate
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/10/15/iran-protests-escalate-police-video-groping-woman/3601665857704/
GIST	<p>Oct. 15 (UPI) -- Protests over the treatment of women in Iran escalated further on Saturday after video surfaced of a police officer apparently groping a woman in a crowd.</p> <p>Two separate videos posted by the BBC appear to show a group of police in riot gear attempting to control a crowd of protestors, with at least one officer groping a woman. Footage taken in the capital Tehran on Wednesday appears to show police attempting to force the woman onto a motorcycle, but she resists and manages to escape.</p> <p>Iranian authorities said Saturday they were aware of the videos and would investigate, without elaborating.</p> <p>Tensions in Iran have continued to ratchet up as ongoing nationwide demonstrations begin to hit vital sectors of the economy. Earlier in the week, hundreds of oil workers joined anti-government protests over alleged human rights violations.</p> <p>The strike at the Bushehr and Damavand petrochemical plants in the southern Iranian port town of Assaluyeh involved more than 1,000 workers who blocked roads and chanted "Death to the dictator!"</p> <p>Protests began last month after 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, a Kurdistan Iranian, died Sept. 16 after she was detained by the country's so-called morality police, or Guidance Patrol, for violating the regime's strict hijab laws.</p> <p>Witnesses claim she was beaten heavily by the arresting officers.</p> <p>In response to her death, Iranians throughout the country have taken to the streets in anti-regime protests that have been met with violent resistance. An Amnesty International report released Thursday found at least 23 children have been killed as authorities crack down on demonstrators.</p> <p>Solidarity protests have broken out in several countries across the world.</p> <p>Internet disruption has been reported across Iran with reports of local journalists being arrested for covering the demonstrations.</p> <p>U.S. President Joe Biden voiced his support on Friday for the Iranian demonstrators.</p>

	<p>"I look over there, and I see 'Free Iran.' And I want you to know we stand with the citizens and brave women of Iran, for real -- for real -- who, right now, are demonstrating to secure their very basic, fundamental rights," Biden said ahead of a prepared speech at a community college in Irvine, Calif.</p> <p>"Women and men should have the right -- the right to freedom of expression and assembly. And women -- women all over the world are being persecuted in various ways. But they should be able to wear, in God's name, what they want to wear. No one should be telling them what to wear.</p> <p>"And Iran has to end the violence against its own citizens simply exercising their fundamental rights. And, you know, [Mahsa] Amini's death was -- I've been doing foreign policy a long, long time. It stunned me what it awakened in Iran. And it's awakened something that I don't think will be quieted in a long, long time," the president said.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/15 XBB subvariant a worse form of Omicron
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-nightmare-xbb-covid-variant-that-beats-our-immunity-is-finally-here?ref=home
GIST	<p>A new subvariant of the novel-coronavirus called XBB dramatically announced itself earlier this week, in Singapore. New COVID-19 cases more than doubled in a day, from 4,700 on Monday to 11,700 on Tuesday—and XBB is almost certainly why. The same subvariant just appeared in Hong Kong, too.</p> <p>A highly mutated descendant of the Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that drove a record wave of infections starting around a year ago, XBB is in many ways the worst form of the virus so far. It's more contagious than any previous variant or subvariant. It also evades the antibodies from monoclonal therapies, potentially rendering a whole category of drugs ineffective as COVID treatments.</p> <p>"It is likely the most immune-evasive and poses problems for current monoclonal antibody-based treatments and prevention strategy," Amesh Adalja, a public-health expert at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, told The Daily Beast.</p> <p>That's the bad news. The good news is that the new "bivalent" vaccine boosters from Pfizer and Moderna seem to work just fine against XBB, even though the original vaccines are less effective against XBB. They won't prevent <i>all</i> infections and reinfections, but they should significantly reduce the chance of severe infection potentially leading to hospitalization or death. "Even with immune-evasive variants, vaccine protection against what matters most—severe disease—remains intact," Adalja said.</p> <p>As the novel-coronavirus evolves to become more contagious and more resistant to certain types of drugs, keeping current on your boosters is "the most impactful thing you can do in preparation for what might come," Peter Hotez, an expert in vaccine development at Baylor College, told The Daily Beast.</p> <p>Scientists first identified XBB in August. It's one of several major subvariants that have evolved from the basic Omicron variant, piling on more and more mutations on key parts of the virus—especially the spike protein, the part of the virus that helps it grab onto and infect our cells.</p> <p>XBB has at least seven new mutations along the spike. Mutations that, taken together, make the subvariant harder for our immune systems to recognize—and thus more likely to evade our antibodies and enter our cells to cause infection.</p> <p>This accumulation of mutations isn't surprising. Changes along the spike protein have characterized most of the major new variants and subvariants of SARS-CoV-2 as the pandemic grinds toward its fourth year.</p> <p>What <i>is</i> surprising is how much competition XBB has as it fights to become the next dominant form of the novel-coronavirus. Several other Omicron subvariants are also in circulation. All of them are highly evolved. Many of them actually share a subset of key mutations, especially on the spike.</p>

So while XBB appears to be gaining traction in Asia, a close cousin of XBB called [BQ.1.1](#) is spreading fast in Europe and some U.S. states. There are others in contention, too, including BA.2.75.2. Hotez calls these viral cousins the “Scrabble” subvariants, a nod to the classic word game and the jumble of scientific designations of closely related viruses.

The Scrabble variants are indicative of what scientists call “convergent evolution.” That is, separate viral sublineages that are picking up more and more of the same mutations. It’s as though Omicron’s children are all separately learning how to be a better virus than their parent, and becoming more like each other in the process.

Immune-escape is the common quality. At least two of the Scrabble subvariants—XBB and BQ.1.1—are pretty much unrecognizable to existing antibody therapies and somewhat *less* recognizable to the antibodies produced by the prime doses of the leading messenger-RNA vaccines.

In evading some of our therapies and, to a lesser extent, our original vaccines, XBB and its cousins are showing us where the novel-coronavirus is heading, genetically speaking. The current surge in infections in places like Singapore is a preview of a potential global surge, this coming winter or spring, as XBB or one of its relatives becomes dominant everywhere.

It’s possible to mitigate the worst outcomes. Natural antibodies from past infection are still the best and most durable antibodies. They don’t last forever. But while they *do* last—a few months or potentially a whole year—the chance of catching a bad case of COVID is pretty low.

So if you had an earlier form of Omicron—say, during the wave of infections that started last Thanksgiving and peaked around February—you might still have good antibodies for a few months. More than enough time to reinforce those fading natural antibodies with a dose of the latest mRNA boosters.

Pfizer and Moderna formulated these new boosters to include some genetic instructions specifically for attacking the BA.5 subvariant of Omicron, which is still the dominant form of SARS-CoV-2 but is disappearing fast as XBB and the other Scrabble subvariants outcompete it.

The bivalent boosters should work pretty well against forms of the virus that are closely related to BA.5, including the Scrabbles. “That is because one of the two components [in the boosters] induces an immune response to BA.5, and most of the new Scrabble variants look more BA.5 like than [the] original China lineage,” Hotez told The Daily Beast.

The implication, of course, is that we’re eventually going to need another new booster in order to keep pace with the fast-evolving virus. Sure, the bivalent boosters work against BA.5 and BA.5’s immediate descendants. But what about the next generation of Omicron subvariants, the one after XBB and its cousins?

More and more health officials are coming around to the idea of an annual COVID booster. U.S. president Joe Biden even endorsed the idea in a statement last month. “As the virus continues to change, we will now be able to update our vaccines annually to target the dominant variant,” Biden [said](#). “Just like your annual flu shot, you should get it sometime between Labor Day and Halloween.”

But one booster a year might not be enough if, as some epidemiologists fear, natural antibodies fade faster and the novel-coronavirus mutates at an accelerating rate. One concern, if it turns out we need twice-a-year new boosters, is whether industry can develop fresh jabs fast enough and health agencies can swiftly approve them.

There’s an even bigger question, however. “The more important factor is just having folks get a more recent booster,” James Lawler, an infectious disease expert at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, told The Daily Beast.

	<p>Even if a new booster is available every six months or so, will enough people get it to make a difference in the overall rates of severe illness and death? Booster uptake is declining globally, but especially in the United States, where just 10 percent of people have gotten the bivalent booster since federal regulators approved them in August.</p> <p>XBB is a nasty little subvariant. But it's not the final word on COVID. The novel-coronavirus will keep mutating, and finding new ways to evade our antibodies, whether or not many people are paying attention. The virus isn't done with us. Which means we can't be done with it. Get boosted. And be prepared to get boosted <i>again</i> in 2023.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/15 Bailout needed? Fewer cars Hwy99 tunnel
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/fewer-drivers-in-seattles-highway-99-tunnel-could-create-need-for-bailout/
GIST	<p>Washington state's new Highway 99 tunnel lost so much traffic because of work-from-home that toll increases and a bailout by the Legislature are needed to solve a permanent budget shortfall, the state Treasurer's Office predicts.</p> <p>Planners couldn't have foreseen that the COVID-19 pandemic would slash toll revenues, which are to cover \$200 million in construction debt plus operating costs for the \$3.3 billion project that includes the tunnel and connecting roads.</p> <p>But in trying to boost revenue, the state's hands will be tied by its own construction of a giant Alaskan Way surface street, which will give drivers more leeway to pass downtown Seattle without paying tolls.</p> <p>Already, the tunnel is \$29 million in the red, despite an urgent 15% toll-rate increase to catch up last year. Tolls range from \$1.20 to \$2.70 each direction for Good to Go passholders, varying by time of day.</p> <p>Jason Richter, deputy state treasurer, warned the state Transportation Commission to expect reduced demand because telework will continue for decades.</p> <p>"We're seeing a permanent reduction in revenues that ranges from 16% to over 30%," he said. Without a traffic resurgence or new money, losses would accumulate to \$237 million by 2051, a spring 2022 forecast says.</p> <p>Such bleak forecasts illustrate the changing nature of work and travel, especially in Seattle, where central-city commutes have dwindled since pandemic lockdowns began in March 2020. Office towers, conventions, tourism and performing arts have reopened, yet tunnel use lags other highways across the U.S.</p> <p>Robert Poole, a toll roads expert at the Reason Foundation, called the Seattle numbers sobering. "This is not a common problem that's affecting other metro areas in the country," he said.</p> <p>But just in the last few weeks, trips surged to an average 43,845 trips a day in September, a gain of 5,000 since spring and similar to just before the pandemic, based on a Seattle Times review of state data. The tunnel provided a relief valve for stadium events, and to escape Interstate 5 congestion during weekend road repairs.</p> <p>"I think it's successful. It had impacts from the pandemic, just like some of the other toll facilities did. But toll traffic and toll revenue is coming back, and slowly but surely," said Ed Barry, toll division director for the Washington State Department of Transportation.</p> <p>By comparison, the Highway 99 project's target volumes, to be fiscally sustainable with minor diversion, were 53,000 daily tunnel trips in 2020, rising to 67,400 by 2040.</p>

Highway 520 also lost traffic since 2020, while the Interstate 405 express toll lanes are filling again this fall, sometimes triggering the \$10 maximum rate.

For the state to encourage traffic creates another set of problems, in this age of [global warming](#) and [road casualties](#). But if drivers do return, it's better they cruise the tunnel than clog downtown streets.

A financial crisis?

When the tunnel opened Feb. 4, 2019, the state missed out on \$10 million by giving drivers a [nine-month grace period](#) with free trips, to encourage tunnel use. Another \$19 million in "loans" from other WSDOT funds were allocated in 2021-22 to cover pandemic toll losses, a [treasurer's spreadsheet shows](#).

Lawmakers imposed a new burden at the last minute, that tolls generate millions per year into a long-term repair fund.

Soon after opening, the toll-free tunnel [attracted 75,000 trips on weekdays](#), nearly the same as 80,000 who bypassed downtown in the old Alaskan Way Viaduct. (Or 109,000 if you include drivers using the viaduct's now-defunct downtown exits.)

Suddenly, when tolls began, WSDOT lost 20,000 daily trips, dropping to 55,000 per weekday. Of those lost trips, about 10,000 shifted to I-5, city streets and transit, [state monitoring found](#), while the rest were unaccounted for, perhaps including telework, bicycling, side streets or canceled personal drives.

Volumes sank further when the pandemic struck, to an average 25,655, including weekends, for 2020, and generated \$14 million, half the target. This year's projection is \$22.9 million, still short of the \$35.4 million benchmark.

"I think it's going to be a budget problem. Who's going to pay for it?" said longtime House Transportation Committee member Ed Orcutt, R-Kalama. "We were told the tolling is going to take care of a certain amount, and now it's not."

Orcutt said the funding gap makes him leery of the future I-5 Interstate Bridge Replacement to Portland near his district, where tolls are part of a \$4.8 billion funding concept. "It's really leaving me with a question, about how reliable the projections are on that bridge."

WSDOT did not sell tunnel-financing bonds that rely on tolls, but mixed Highway 99 debt with other roads statewide, funded by gasoline taxes. Therefore, there's no default, bankruptcy or loss of credit rating if the tunnel loses money.

"It gives us a little more wiggle room with lawmakers," said Reema Griffith, transportation commission executive director.

That differs from Highway 520, where toll income is pledged under contract to repay up to \$1.2 billion in bond debt to investors.

The Legislature has been pliable, voting this year for a \$130 million subsidy that lowered Tacoma Narrows Bridge tolls from \$5.25 to \$4.50 round-trip, in addition to \$111 million previously transferred.

House Transportation Committee Chair Jake Fey, D-Tacoma, says all future state and federal money is earmarked for projects, so cash for Highway 99 must be taken from other road needs.

"Some of this just needs to play out a bit," Fey said. "We don't know what the new normal is yet."

WSDOT announced Thursday it will receive \$77 million from tunnel contractors for cost overruns, after the state Supreme Court declined to hear arguments over a 2019 jury ruling in WSDOT's favor — a money source that Fey and ranking Senate Transportation Committee member Curtis King, R-Yakima, said lawmakers could apply to fill gaps in Highway 99 toll revenue.

Tolls used to rouse emotions and rivalry, from politicians elsewhere who resented subsidizing Seattle's glitzy waterfront redevelopment.

In 2009 the Legislature voted for tolls to recover \$400 million of a \$2.8 billion state contribution to build the tunnel plus connecting roads — assuming \$400 million was the extra cost for a tunnel instead of another viaduct. They lowered the goal to \$200 million in 2013, when a planning committee realized a projected \$3 toll would provoke drivers to skip the tunnel and clog other roads.

Now that's becoming elusive, too.

"The proponents constantly overstate toll revenue and constantly underestimate the amount of people that will avoid tolls," said former Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn, who opposed the tunnel. He considers tunnel toll shortages an instance of "strategic misrepresentation" that occurs worldwide, by project sponsors.

Who's using the tunnel?

WSDOT hasn't done surveys, but data shows tunnel driving fluctuates by season. September's surge doesn't guarantee a lucrative January. Saturdays are busier than Sundays, Mondays and holidays in 2022. Southbound is busier than northbound, a trend for which the Mariners' playoff race deserves some credit, Barry said.

During weekend I-5 repairs southbound in Sodo, an average 47,068 drivers used the tunnel, far more than on average weekdays. The busiest since the pandemic was Saturday, Aug. 27, 2022, when I-5 lane closures, a full Highway 520 closure and a Mariners game all happened.

Commute peaks have become less crowded than in the 2010s, as travelers spread more to midday and weekends. That could mean adjusting the toll rates (which jump from \$1.50 to \$2.70 at 3 p.m. weekdays) to be more even, Griffith said.

Is traffic coming back?

The Sept. 18 reopening of the West Seattle Bridge, which provides a direct Highway 99 northbound exit, has caused a "significant spike in volumes northbound," said toll division spokesperson Emily Glad.

During the bridge's 2½-year repair closure, a typical detour of 30 to 60 minutes deterred trips toward downtown and north Seattle.

"It's incredibly convenient for me when I drive from West Seattle to the South Lake Union area" in just four minutes of highway travel, said Tom Rasmussen, former chair of the City Council's transportation committee. The tunnel looks busier but still uncongested, he said.

Office occupancy is just [36% of pre-pandemic levels](#) and hasn't gained in recent weeks. King County Metro Transit serves only half its former 400,000 daily trips countywide. Sound Transit's downtown hub at Westlake Station served only 9,600 average weekday trips in August, fewer than Northgate Station.

Since early 2020, an easing of emergency health regulations, along with more delivery vehicles, midday errands by teleworkers, and leisure trips have returned traffic back to pre-pandemic totals across the U.S. and Washington state.

Poole expects the national work-from-home average should land between 10% and 15% permanently. For another six years or so, major deck reconstruction on I-5, from downtown to Northgate, will cause multilane, multiweek shutdowns on the Ship Canal Bridge, sure to push travelers into the tolled tunnel and help the bottom line.

Is WSDOT sabotaging itself?

Highway studies in the '00s assumed ever-increasing traffic, and that half the drivers to Ballard and Magnolia would use the toll tunnel, and half would take surface routes.

It's quite a tightrope walk WSDOT has undertaken, two decades after the 2001 Nisqually Quake damaged the viaduct.

"You can only raise the tolls so high, because there are a lot of free options," Griffith said.

The Seattle City Council preferred a tunnel largely to avoid the risk that a [surface highway would carry 45,000 to 75,000 cars](#), far beyond the 25,000 mark that architects called the limit for a pleasant, walkable waterfront.

But transportation agencies wound up delivering *both* a tunnel and a surface Alaskan Way four to six lanes wide, [expanding to nine lanes](#) plus parking near the ferry terminal. The widest blocks provide bus lanes, four general lanes, drop-off space and two left-turn lanes at the ferry terminal. It's so vast, people push a pedestrian-signal button in the median, when they can't cross from Pioneer Square in a single green light.

"The tunnel was and remains a betrayal of vision for a community that cares so much about climate and equity and sustainability," said McGinn, now executive director of nonprofit advocacy group [America Walks](#). "And so is the waterfront highway, for that matter."

However, the Waterfront Seattle plan does add a landscaped overpass park, a pedestrian street near the stadiums, a small beach, broader sidewalks, street trees and bike lanes. The place is quieter with the viaduct gone.

Even now, McGinn said, the city should reduce Alaskan Way to three lanes between the Seattle Aquarium and the Olympic Sculpture Park, where there's excess capacity and the coming four-lane Belltown bridge.

Drivers have adapted to a five-lane waterfront street since the 2010s, for a decade of roadwork and tolls.

It's a thing

When the tunnel opened, WSDOT ran a [\\$4.4 million marketing campaign](#) that depicted the tunnel shape [like Amazon's trademark smile](#), and the slogan "It's a thing" emphasized the tunnel is the fastest path through downtown.

Poole compares Highway 99's role to the I-405 express toll lanes where drivers spend 75 cents to \$10 to escape crowded general lanes.

"It's parallel to I-5 and parallel to surface streets, which makes it an option people can take."

Express toll lanes in other states that have to repay bonds [have regained their traffic](#) and even a profit, he said. Then again, traffic in Texas, Virginia and North Carolina didn't lapse as long as in Seattle, he said.

"If they ask me for my advice, this is what they should do: Sell the benefits of a faster route through downtown and reliability of the trip time."

Barry, the WSDOT toll director, said the tunnel already accomplished one goal. No longer is there any risk that the viaduct will topple in an earthquake.

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HEADLINE	10/14 More air travelers avoid checking bags
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/airline-news/2022/10/14/travelers-avoid-checking-bags/10497969002/
GIST	<p>More fliers are becoming cautious of checking in their baggage on their next flight, and it might be for good reason.</p> <p>About two months ago, a Florida airline subcontractor, Giovanni De Luca, was arrested in connection to the theft of \$16,000 worth of items from checked-in luggage. One traveler reported items missing from his</p>

luggage and another reported that hers never arrived at her final destination. Thankfully, the latter had an Apple AirTag in her suitcase, and it led authorities to De Luca's home, where some of the stolen goods were recovered.

For some, mishandled baggage is more than a financial hit – it can mean the loss of an important device that helps them "function and participate in everyday activities," Emily Tuite, an Austin woman whose [custom prosthetic leg](#) never made it to her final destination last month, said. "Without it, I'm disabled."

These are just a few recent examples of how air travel disruptions have passengers wary of handing over their suitcases to an airline. In a September [survey](#) of over 1,700 Americans by TripIt, a trip-planning company, almost 60% said they've experienced some sort of disruption while traveling this past summer.

Of those, one out of six people said their luggage was lost or delayed. According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, [over 1.9 million bags were mishandled last year](#) by U.S. air carriers. Experts agree that staffing shortages at airports, plus the high travel demand, have likely caused an increase in mishandled baggage, prompting a change in the way passengers pack and fly.

Ninety-three percent of travelers said they now have "changed their behavior when it comes to preparing for a trip" due to the increase in incidents.

"Whether experienced directly, or as seen in the headlines, travelers aren't leaving anything to chance as they head into the fall and holiday travel season ahead," Jen Moyse, Vice President of Product for TripIt from SAP Concur, said in a statement to USA TODAY.

Luggage tags aren't enough anymore

The survey found that for upcoming trips, 41% of Americans said they will avoid checking in a bag, and 23% will use back-tracking technology like an Apple AirTag if they do.

Moyse recommended that more travelers pack an AirTag or similar device as "one way to feel a bit more in control during travel."

"AirTags have proven to be a reliable way to determine exactly where your bag is, but keep in mind that they don't make it any more likely (or unlikely) for your bag to be delayed or lost and that no tracking device is infallible," she said. "The real benefit is that you can have more information on where your items are, which can be especially reassuring if the airline itself doesn't have an exact location for your bag."

She reminded travelers, "Make sure to pack your valuables, medications, a change of clothes, and any other important items in your carry-on since it's less likely to be lost or delayed. While having a bag not make it with you to your destination is never a good experience, it can be slightly less disruptive if you have some essentials with you."

It's also [recommended](#) by travel experts to keep a detailed list and even take photos on your phone of what you're packing in your check-in luggage. This way, travelers have proof of and know the value of the items being handled by the airline in case anything is to happen. Additionally, people can take photos of your luggage, noting other identifying features of it.

What should you do if this happens to you?

Of the survey respondents who experienced some sort of flight disruption this summer, only 16% received compensation and 73% "neither received or asked for compensation." Part of that may be because people just don't know how to go about the process, TripIt said.

The good news for delayed luggage is that [airlines are required to compensate](#) for "reasonable, verifiable, and actual incidental expenses that they may incur while their bags are delayed," within maximum liability limits. If the flight is domestic, that amount is \$3,800. The number is lower for international flights, though, at about \$1,780.

	<p>If your bag is lost, the airline needs to compensate you for its contents, taking depreciation into account and the same maximum liability amounts.</p> <p>Passengers are recommended to check their airline's lost luggage policy before departing on their flight. For example, Delta Air Lines passengers whose bags are delayed for at least 12 hours and submit a claim may be eligible for a travel voucher and "are entitled to reasonable expense reimbursements due to the delay of your bag(s)" of \$50 per day.</p> <p>If the process isn't going smoothly with your airline, you can reach out to the Department of Transportation with a complaint.</p> <p>For the record, people aren't going to stop traveling this fall despite the increase in disruptions, the survey found. Nearly 100% of the survey respondents said they are still planning trips for the year ahead, whether that is visiting friends and family or going on a fall vacation.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/14 Spokane left millions for housing unspent
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/money/spokane-city-several-million-dollars-f-housing-unspent-former-housing-director/293-8019d300-c4e9-41ea-ba98-6f52260bb328
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — Spokane's former top-housing official sent a letter to Spokane Mayor Nadine Woodward the day he left his job detailing millions of dollars for housing left unspent.</p> <p>Former Spokane Neighborhood Housing and Human Services Director John Hall resigned in September, just three months after Mayor Nadine Woodward appointed him to the role.</p> <p>On his final day at city hall, he sent a 27-page letter to the Mayor and city administrators describing his observations of dysfunction in the city.</p> <p>In the letter, Hall describes a combination of limited staff and inexperience as the reasons for the delays in distributing several million dollars for housing in the community.</p> <p>In August, city council approved \$10 million in federal affordable housing funding for 11 projects. This would create 220 units of housing. But, Hall wrote that work on these projects hasn't even started.</p> <p>He said what's even more disappointing is the city has built up \$5.4 million from another housing program and it's all gone unspent over the last three years.</p> <p>On top of that, the city has yet to submit a plan to the U.S. Department of Housing Urban Development on how it will spend \$6 million.</p> <p>City Spokesperson Brian Coddington attributes the delay in spending to limited staffing in the housing department and competing priorities.</p> <p>"There's only so much staff time to go around and they are moving as quickly as possible," Coddington said. "They want to make sure that they're doing the best work that they can do, because these are heavily regulated funding sources that require auditing both at the state and federal level."</p> <p>Hall said the city is at risk of losing some of its funding for housing if it doesn't act. But, Coddington said the city has no intention of missing those deadlines.</p> <p>Hall's letter also lists recommendations to improve the offices in the Housing department, including "My 311" and neighborhood services. Coddington said the city is always looking for ways to improve.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/14 Reversal: Seattle keeps City Hall Park
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-king-county-reverse-course-will-keep-city-hall-park-under-city-control/D77SLM744JH3JHOTDB3T4N35GQ/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — After King County Executive Dow Constantine and then-Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan reached an agreement last year for Seattle to swap the troubled City Hall Park for 13 county properties, the city will retain ownership of the park.</p> <p>Current Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell and Constantine announced that they have reached a new agreement about the future of the park and will be developing a plan to safely open the park and fountain area in Prefontaine Place.</p> <p>The park has been fenced off and closed since August 2021 after judges and courthouse workers urged the city and the county to do something after several attacks, shootings, and a fatal stabbing at the park.</p> <p>The situation at the park had gotten so bad that a King County judge said that jurors were refusing to show up for jury duty because they did not feel safe.</p> <p>Last summer, hundreds of people marched around the King County Courthouse and demanded a change in safety conditions.</p> <p>The city then shut down the park, which continues to be surrounded by a gate.</p> <p>Now, there is a new plan for the city to revitalize the park to make it a safe and welcoming space.</p> <p>The city council is expected to pass Harrell’s proposed city budget, which includes \$2.8 million for the park. Investments will be made to reopen and revitalize the park to serve as a public gathering space and a place for food trucks, concerts and other events that will attract visitors. There are also plans for moveable and permanent seating areas where people can eat lunch.</p> <p>The city will also clean and reactivate the historic fountain at Prefontaine Place and look into installing public restrooms in the park.</p> <p>As far as safety, King County Metro Police and Sound Transit Police will have a visible safety presence at transit stations and stops. The city will partner with building owners and tenants to make sure building security measures are in place.</p> <p>“Making this long-neglected space a safe and enjoyable park for thousands of King County staff, jurors, customers, visitors and residents will help restore and revitalize downtown Seattle. King County appreciates Mayor Harrell’s proposal to create a safe and welcoming front yard for our historic courthouse,” said Constantine.</p> <p>The city will also partner with local businesses to occupy currently vacant stores nearby to boost foot traffic and shopping.</p> <p>Also planned are recreational areas and kiosks to help visitors to the city find their way through the downtown core and Pioneer Square.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/14 King Co. halts SODO homeless expansion
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/sodo-homeless-shelter-expansion-halted/281-5e4881e7-13cd-4421-9496-07de63b4bc0e
GIST	SEATTLE — King County will not expand a homeless shelter in Seattle's SODO neighborhood after pushback from residents and business owners.

The proposed expansion near the Chinatown-International District would have added space for an additional 150 people at Salvation Army's Lighthouse Shelter which currently has 270 beds. If approved by the King County Council, money for the expansion will be used for other projects that provide access to shelter or housing.

"People living and working in the community have shared unease about what they see in the neighborhood today – poor public safety conditions in the CID, and the feeling of doing more than other neighborhoods to provide human services," King County Executive Dow Constantine said in a statement. "These are reasonable concerns that can and should be addressed."

Community members held rallies against the proposal for weeks. In late [September, people demonstrated at the shelter's doorstep](#). The following day, they crowded the King County Council Chambers. Protesters demanded to know the county's public safety plan is to protect people at the shelter and in surrounding neighborhoods.

Advocates in the Chinatown International District were surprised by Friday's announcement but said it's a step in the right direction.

"I was very shocked because it's something we weren't expecting. We're in it for the fight and we won," said Matt Chan, advocate for the Chinatown International District.

"While we have kind of tackled a big hurdle for the future, there's still a lot of past harm that needs to be repaired from the current shelter that went in without our lived experiences needs to be addressed regarding public safety," said Tanya Woo, volunteer with the CID community watch group.

In recent weeks, neighbors in the Chinatown International District raised concerns over crime and lack of communication from the county.

"Our voices were minimized several times that we were not given priority, and that were painted as being anti homeless. We are not and we want to help our unhoused, but it has to be done in an equitable process," Woo said.

Those in the CID said it's not them versus the unhoused.

"We feed them here, we provide mutual aid, they even give them haircuts here they live with us here they're our neighbors but what isn't appropriate is the crime that comes with it and that's what the government has to address," said Chan.

While Friday's announcement is a win there's they said there's still more work to do.

"The two main points that we've been advocating for which is having a community outreach plan, as well as a public safety plan, those fears have not been addressed yet," Chan said.

According to Seattle police, the number of violent crime reports climbed from 175 in 2020 to nearly 250 in 2021 in the Chinatown-International District. This year has already seen more than 200 violent crime calls.

On September 21, Chief Adrian Diaz said there are already at least 10 places offering shelter and, or services within a 30-minute walk from the SODO site.

"Maybe we should just take a step back and really evaluate how much level of service is in this area because another one really could create an impact, almost permanently damaging the neighborhood," Diaz said.

In the downtown Seattle area, about 750 people are sleeping outside each night.

	Under Executive Constantine's proposal to redirect funding, money would be used for a one-time wage boost for providers and investing in communities in the county that are able to quickly house people experiencing homelessness, such as the Green River area in south King County.
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HEADLINE	10/14 Seattle mayor: expand homeless response
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/mayor-harrell-seeks-to-expand-seattles-homelessness-encampment-response/
GIST	<p>Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell wants to expand the city's homelessness outreach effort and divide the team into smaller groups to concentrate on individual neighborhoods across the city.</p> <p>In his proposed budget released late last month, Harrell is requesting about a \$14 million increase in funding for the city's Unified Care Team, which coordinates outreach for people experiencing homelessness, provides connections to support services and fields community complaints about garbage, fires and other related nuisances.</p> <p>In 2023, Harrell wants to increase the city's homelessness and housing funding, including expanding the Unified Care Team, which receives anywhere from 800 to 1,000 community complaints per week. Tuesday, Harrell said this plan will include a 150% increase of staff working with the community and doing outreach.</p> <p>There would be around four to six teams that consisted of outreach coordinators but would focus on distinct geographical areas rather than the single team currently responsible for the whole city, in order to provide offers of social services and shelter before clearing an area.</p> <p>"We think that we have instilled a sense of urgency, a sense of compassion, particularly for those experiencing homelessness," Harrell said during a news conference Tuesday of his team's first nine months in office.</p> <p>"So our budget reflects our plan to move forward to draw from lessons learned," he later added.</p> <p>The approach would be similar to that which the city took in the months leading up to clearing an encampment at Woodland Park this spring. Outreach to those in the Woodland Park encampment — then one of the largest in the city — began in January, and produced a total of 100 offers for shelter. More than 80 people connected with shelter, including 60 referrals to tiny house villages, 25 referrals to enhanced shelters and four relocations to permanent housing alternatives, before the city cleared remaining structures in May.</p> <p>Harrell and King County Regional Homelessness Authority CEO Marc Dones said in May that similar "genuine outreach" would become the standard for future clearings.</p> <p>But, to offer that level of attention to each of the 403 sites — consisting of encampments and people living in RVs — identified by the city, the team would be divided among several smaller teams.</p> <p>The tentative areas for teams to begin would include "downtown neighborhoods" where the city has identified 58 sites; Sodo Duwamish/Industrial area where the city has identified 42 sites; Northeast, where the city has identified 68 sites; Northwest, where the city has identified 75 sites; Southwest/Georgetown where the city has identified 74 sites; and Southeast/East, where the city has identified 86 sites.</p> <p>"When a community is informed, involved and updated they will have the patience to engage in a person-centered process over time," Deputy Mayor of Housing and Homelessness Tiffany Washington said.</p> <p>Washington could not provide much detail about the way the geographical areas were determined but did note that it was largely based on the number of encampments, RVs and structures in an area. According to Washington, the boundaries would not be permanent and teams would move as areas improved.</p>

	<p>According to the mayor’s office, the city spent \$33.1 million on the team in 2022, including \$9.6 million in one-time funds that would have to be replaced this new budget cycle in order to maintain current service. Harrell’s proposed 2023 budget includes \$38.17 million for the team, including \$5.1 million in new spending and an increased ask of the city’s operational budget to account for the one-time funds.</p> <p>“This level of service that we’re demonstrating will lapse. The progress we’re making in the city building our one Seattle will lapse,” Harrell said, stressing the importance of funding the team as the city council debates and will soon seek to amend the mayor’s proposed budget.</p> <p>Asked if his plan signaled a shift toward responding to community concerns rather than the “wholistic outreach” promised earlier this year, Harrell said it was not shifting away from the original plan but “evolving” the city’s approach to both issues.</p> <p>“We appreciate the partnership and collaboration of the [Unified Care Team], and expect that we will strengthen our work together going forward,” said Anne Martens, spokesperson for the King County Regional Homelessness Authority, in a statement.</p>
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Cyber, Tech Awareness

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HEADLINE	10/16 Crooks exploit Ian as lure for scams, thefts
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/cybercriminals-use-hurricane-ian-as-lure-for-scams-theft-of-fema-funds/
GIST	<p>Scammers are using the crisis faced by victims of Hurricane Ian to steal government funds and personal information, according to experts at several cybersecurity companies.</p> <p>Hurricane Ian — the deadliest hurricane to strike the state of Florida since 1935 — directly caused the death of at least 137 people and \$67 billion in insured losses. Thousands of people were displaced by the destruction caused by the category 4 hurricane.</p> <p>But as recovery efforts coalesce, Cofense principal threat advisor Ronnie Tokazowski said he has seen evidence showing scammers are going after relief funds available to those in need from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).</p> <p>Tokazowski said a colleague in Nigeria shared screenshots with him of hackers speaking on WhatsApp about ways to steal disaster relief assistance. The screenshots show scammers instructing people of ways they can file fraudulent claims on DisasterAssistance.gov.</p> <p>“In the first image, scammers instruct other scammers to select the option of ‘Hurricane/Hail/Rain/Wind Driven Rain’ as what type of damage occurred, and to select the option of ‘Tornado/ Wind’ damage,” he said.</p> <p>“In total, the documents and images shared by scammers are a total of 23 different steps, each of which details what to say, how to fill out the application, and what type of information can be used to file a fake claim. To note, the social security numbers (SSN) that are being used could be stolen, bought from the internet, or a variety of either.”</p> <p>The scammers also use a platform called “ssn-check.org” to check whether the stolen SSNs are verified and when they were created. In some cases, scammers may use romance-based schemes to get SSNs from victims, according to Tokazowski, who added that with the amount of information freely available on the dark web, there is little reason for attackers to pivot and start phishing for account information.</p> <p>Tokazowski noted that the scammers typically use the same IP address and email account to submit their claims.</p>

FEMA did not respond to requests for comment but Tokazowski told The Record that they have been in contact with the Secret Service, which told them that the agency is aware of the scams.

He noted that Nigerian groups like Scattered Canary have been stealing FEMA funds since 2018 and did significant damage stealing funds dispersed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Tokazowski, while many of the groups launching these scams are based in Nigeria, they have money mules or accounts in the United States that are used to launder and wire the stolen money.

Contractors and donations

Several other cybersecurity experts confirmed that they too are seeing a wide array of scams related to stealing funds meant for Hurricane Ian victims.

INKY's Bukar Alibe said they have seen phishing scams related to the recent hurricane that originate from free mail senders like gmail.com and outlook.com.

"One campaign was sent to 112 recipients with the subject line of "RE: your family relatives who died during the last Hurricane.!!!" and a display address of "Natural Disaster Center.' We have also seen the Red Cross and Small Business Administration being impersonated in phishing emails that claim to provide relief," Alibe told The Record.

"All had no links and attachments so it's an assumption that phishers are using social engineering to get the recipient to reply back or call a phone number."

SlashNext CEO Patrick Harr explained that they are seeing thousands of scams and credential stealing attacks.

Many are scams centered around offering contractor services like painting, repair and clean-up.

Dr. Francis Gaffney, senior director of threat intelligence at Mimecast, explained that scammers are also exploiting generosity in relation to the hurricane, sending spoofed emails containing URL links to cloned or fake charity websites that can be used to harvest user credentials, and financial data.

Gaffney and Herr urged those affected by the hurricane to be wary of sharing personal information with anyone. People should input any web address into the search bar and confirm that checks are undertaken to guarantee the authenticity of any organization and their online presence, Gaffney explained.

Both also warned of people being contacted by scammers alleging to be from the government, with Gaffney suggesting people look for the ".gov" tag to make sure an email address or website is legitimate.

"People that reach out to say they are government agencies are not likely to be legit and giving personal information to contractors or insurance adjusters is not wise," Herr said.

"The best course of action is to initiate the contact or conversation yourself and check with government agencies, insurance companies and contractors to verify credentials, legitimate URLs and phone numbers."

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HEADLINE	10/16 New PHP info-stealing malware: Ducktail
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-php-information-stealing-malware-targets-facebook-accounts/
GIST	A new Ducktail phishing campaign is spreading a never-before-seen Windows information-stealing malware written in PHP used to steal Facebook accounts, browser data, and cryptocurrency wallets.

Ducktail phishing campaigns were [first revealed](#) by researchers from WithSecure in July 2022, who linked the attacks to Vietnamese hackers.

Those campaigns relied on social engineering attacks through LinkedIn, pushing .NET Core malware masquerading as a PDF document supposedly containing details about a marketing project.

The malware targeted information stored in browsers, [focusing on Facebook Business](#) account data, and exfiltrated it to a private Telegram channel that acted as a C2 server. These stolen credentials are then used for financial fraud or to conduct malicious advertising.

Zscaler [now reports](#) spotting signs of new activity involving a refreshed Ducktail campaign that uses a PHP script to act as a Windows information-stealing malware.

A PHP information-stealing malware

Ducktail has now replaced the older NET Core information-stealing malware used in previous campaigns with one written in PHP.

Most of the fake lures for this campaign are related to games, subtitle files, adult videos, and cracked MS Office applications. These are hosted in ZIP format on legitimate file hosting services.

When executed, the installation takes place in the background while the victim sees fake 'Checking Application Compatibility' pop-ups in the frontend, waiting for a fake application sent by the scammers to install.

The PHP malware achieves persistence by adding scheduled tasks on the host to execute daily and at regular intervals. At the same time, a generated TMP file runs a parallel process to launch the stealer component.

The targeted data includes extensive Facebook account details, sensitive data stored in browsers, browser cookies, cryptocurrency wallet and account information, and basic system data.

The collected information isn't exfiltrated to Telegram anymore but instead stored in a JSON website that also hosts account tokens and data required to perform on-device fraud.

Expanding the targeting scope

In the previous campaign, Ducktail targeted employees of organizations working in the financial or marketing department of companies who would likely have permission to create and run advertising campaigns on the social media platform.

The goal was to take control of those accounts and direct payments to their bank accounts or run their own Facebook campaigns to promote Ducktail to more victims.

In the latest campaign, however, Zscaler noticed that the targeting scope has been broadened to include regular Facebook users and to siphon whatever valuable information they may have stored in their accounts.

Still, if the account type is determined to be a business account, the malware will attempt to fetch additional information about payment methods, cycles, amounts spent, owner details, verification status, owned pages, PayPal address, and more.

Ducktail's evolution and attempt to evade subsequent monitoring by security researchers indicates that the threat actors aim to continue their profitable operations.

Users are advised to be watchful with instant messages on LinkedIn and treat file download requests with extra caution, especially cracked software, game mods, and cheats.

HEADLINE	10/16 Venus ransomware targets RDP services
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/venus-ransomware-targets-publicly-exposed-remote-desktop-services/
GIST	<p>Threat actors behind the relatively new Venus Ransomware are hacking into publicly-exposed Remote Desktop services to encrypt Windows devices.</p> <p>Venus Ransomware appears to have begun operating in the middle of August 2022 and has since encrypted victims worldwide. However, there was another ransomware using the same encrypted file extension since 2021, but it is unclear if they are related.</p> <p>BleepingComputer first learned of the ransomware from MalwareHunterTeam, who was contacted by security analyst linuxct looking for information on it.</p> <p>Linuxct told BleepingComputer that the threat actors gained access to a victim's corporate network through the Windows Remote Desktop protocol.</p> <p>Another victim in the BleepingComputer forums also reported RDP being used for initial access to their network, even when using a non-standard port number for the service.</p> <p>As the ransomware appears to be targeting publicly-exposed Remote Desktop services, even those running on non-standard TCP ports, it is vital to put these services behind a firewall.</p> <p>Ideally, no Remote Desktop Services should be publicly exposed on the Internet and only be accessible via a VPN.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Amazon customers warned of scam texts
SOURCE	https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/warning-amazon-customers-scam-text-123214065.html?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>People who have accounts with Amazon are being warned about a new text message scam.</p> <p>Customers have reported receiving texts, supposedly from Amazon, asking them to follow a link to secure their accounts after an attempted log in. However once they log in, the scammers are able to steal their personal information.</p> <p>Consumer rights experts Which? have urged people to be aware.</p> <p>An Amazon spokesperson told Which?: "These messages were not sent by Amazon.</p> <p>"Scammers attempting to impersonate Amazon put our customers and our brand at risk. Although these scams take place outside our store, we will continue to invest in protecting customers and educating the public on scam avoidance.</p> <p>"We encourage customers to report suspected scams to us so that we can protect their accounts and refer bad actors to law enforcement to help keep consumers safe. Please visit our help pages to find additional information on how to identify scams and report them."</p> <p>According to the consumer rights experts, one of the texts reads: "Amazon: We detected a login into your account from a new device on 27/09/2022 at 15:10:08 UTC. If this wasn't you, you can terminate that session via: [https://checkup-amazon.com]."</p> <p>Another text may say: "From Amazon - A new login has been attempted from IP address: 82.966.81.27 (Ipswich).If this was NOT you, secure your account immediately. [amazon-logins.com]."</p>

	When experts entered their details, they were taken to another "convincing" fraudulent webpage which asked for a name, date of birth, mobile number, home address and email address. Which? has reported the fake URLs to the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC).
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HEADLINE	10/17 US tech boosts China hypersonic missiles
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/10/17/china-hypersonic-missiles-american-technology/
GIST	<p>Military research groups at the leading edge of China's hypersonics and missile programs — many on a U.S. export blacklist — are purchasing a range of specialized American technology, including products developed by firms that have received millions of dollars in grants and contracts from the Pentagon, a Washington Post investigation has found.</p> <p>The advanced software products are acquired by these military organizations through private Chinese firms that sell them on despite U.S. export controls designed to prevent sales or resales to foreign entities deemed a threat to U.S. national security, the investigation shows.</p> <p>Scientists who work in the sprawling network of Chinese military research academies and the companies that aid them said in interviews that American technology — such as highly specialized aeronautical engineering software — fills critical gaps in domestic technology and is key to advances in Chinese weaponry.</p> <p>"In this case the American technology is superior — we can't do certain things without foreign technology," said one Chinese scientist who works in a university lab that conducts testing for hypersonic vehicles. "There isn't the same technical foundation."</p> <p>Some of the U.S. firms whose products are reaching Chinese military research groups have been the beneficiaries of Defense Department grants to spur cutting-edge innovation, according to a federal program database, creating the specter of the Pentagon subsidizing Chinese military advances.</p> <p>"It's very disturbing, because the bottom line is that technology that can be used for military hypersonics was funded by U.S. taxpayers, through the U.S. government, and ended up in China," said Iain Boyd, director of the Center for National Security Initiatives at the University of Colorado at Boulder, who conducts experimental research on hypersonics.</p> <p>The Washington Post mapped more than 300 sales since 2019 of U.S.-origin technology to dozens of entities involved in China's hypersonics or missile programs by analyzing contract solicitation and award documents issued by the groups, as well as speaking to six Chinese scientists working in military labs and universities who described almost unfettered access to American technology with applications in the design and testing of missiles. The scientists spoke to The Post on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive research.</p> <p>The steady stream of high-end software flowing to a critical area of research in which the Chinese military threatens to outpace the United States highlights the challenge Washington has in trying to prevent China's military from exploiting American innovation.</p> <p>Hypersonics refers to a range of emerging technologies that can propel missiles at greater than five times the speed of sound and potentially evade current defenses. Pentagon officials have said the United States and China are locked in an arms race to develop the most potent hypersonic weapons.</p> <p>To build a hypersonic missile, scientists need to solve advanced physics problems relating to missile flight. Wind tunnel tests and live launches such as a highly publicized one China undertook in 2021 are costly. Using commercial American software, the result of years and sometimes decades of research and development, minimizes the time and resources needed for such tests, Chinese scientists told The Post.</p>

The American products also have applications in commercial aerospace, as well as in other fields where China and the United States compete, including aircraft engine design.

The technology being purchased includes various forms of computer-aided engineering software, such as aeroelasticity software, which can be used to simulate and analyze the extreme physical conditions experienced by airborne vehicles. It allows scientists to test designs virtually without relying solely on more costly wind tunnel tests and live drills. Other sales include hardware such as interferometers, which can be used by scientists to capture highly accurate data in wind tunnel tests.

U.S. scientists said computer-aided simulation is a critical step before advancing to wind tunnel and live tests for weapons such as hypersonic missiles.

“I’m going to design [a hypersonic missile] with these software tools,” said one U.S. researcher who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the matter’s sensitivity. “I’m going to fly it in a computer and analyze it with these tools. And once I’ve gotten the model to the point where it flies my mission, I can go test it in a wind tunnel.”

U.S. export controls ban any sales of American products to China — and their resale inside China — if there is knowledge that they will be used for developing a missile or if they are destined for a restricted entity. But some of the technology, which also has applications in civilian aerospace research, is finding its way to Chinese military groups and restricted entities through Chinese middlemen firms — some of which openly advertise relationships with weapons and military groups on their websites, The Post found.

Exporters are responsible under Commerce Department guidance to determine whether their distributor is selling to a restricted party or for a barred use. “What we’ve always told companies is you cannot self-blind,” said Matthew S. Borman, the department’s deputy assistant secretary for export administration, in an interview. “You can’t just say, ‘Oh, I’m selling it to a distributor, I don’t know what they’re going to do with it.’ Especially if it’s a party where it’s readily ascertainable that they are a supplier to the Chinese military.”

“The first responsibility is on the company,” Borman added. “And if they don’t exercise that responsibility, they run the risk that they will be committing a violation.”

The blanket export restriction applies to companies or organizations on a blacklist known as the Entity List, which prohibits sales without prior U.S. government permission to entities deemed a risk to national security. The ban on selling products for use in developing a missile is known as the “missile catchall,” Borman said. That’s because it doesn’t matter if the item can otherwise be shipped to China without a Commerce Department export license. Even an exporter seeking to ship a pencil made in the United States to a known missile end user in China would be denied a license, he said.

A ‘bright, bright, bright red flag’

Using Chinese government procurement databases and other contract documents, The Post identified almost 50 U.S. firms whose products were sold through intermediaries since 2019 to Chinese military groups that work on missile technology. The aerodynamics simulation software of two companies — Arizona-based Zona Technology and California-headquartered Metacomp Technologies — was sold through resellers to the Chinese Academy of Aerospace Aerodynamics (CAAA), contract solicitation and award documents show. CAAA was instrumental in the design of China’s 2021 hypersonic missile test, according to two Chinese military scientists familiar with the program.

The Post could not determine whether the software was used in the missile design process for that test. But its potential uses include the simulation of conditions in preparation for a real-life test such as the one in 2021, American and Chinese scientists said.

The test, which sent a hypersonic vehicle hurtling around the Earth, shocked U.S. military and intelligence officials, and led Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to call it [“very close to” a “Sputnik moment.”](#)

China in recent years has made rapid advances in missile technology, part of a broader national drive to build a “world-class military” on par with leading defense powers like the United States by 2049, the centenary of the People’s Republic of China.

Though CAAA is not on the Entity List, the “missile catchall” provision should bar American software from being sent to it if the exporter or one of its resellers had knowledge that the software was going to be used for missile development, experts said.

“U.S. export controls require a license for the export of any type of software, hardware or technology to China if there is knowledge that it would be used to develop a missile or other item used for weapons of mass destruction,” said Kevin Wolf, a former senior official at the Commerce Department’s Bureau of Industry and Security who is now a partner at Akin Gump and advises clients on export controls. “And that license would generally be denied.”

Other experts said CAAA should be on the Entity List.

“For at least the past seven years, CAAA has been a core contributor to the development of China’s hypersonic and other advanced missile programs as a hub of rocket design, test and wind tunnel expertise in China,” said Nathan Picarsic, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and co-founder of the geostrategic consulting firm Horizon Advisory. “Simply put, CAAA helps the Chinese military develop advanced missiles.”

Zona chief executive P.C. Chen said he had no knowledge of a sale of its aeroelasticity simulation software — a type of aerodynamics software — directly to CAAA. He said that Zona had in the past sold the software to Hifar Technologies, the Beijing-based military technology supplier that, according to a contract award document, resold it to CAAA. Zona’s China distributor, Jon Ding, who runs Georgia-based 2D Technology, said he licensed Zona software to Hifar in 2019.

Hifar makes no secret that it sells software and consulting services to Chinese missile groups. It lists more than 50 military groups and suppliers as “cooperation partners” on its website, including CAAA, the China Air to Air Missile Research Institute, the Chinese Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology, and the People’s Liberation Army’s missile group, the China Aerodynamics Research and Development Center.

Asked whether he checked that all the clients Hifar has sold Zona software to weren’t military entities, Ding said, “I didn’t, because they promised me and I trust them, so I don’t do this kind of tracking.” He said he warned Hifar not to sell to restricted groups.

Wolf, the former BIS official, said that if a distributor listed a number of military groups, including missile groups, in China as partners, that would be a “bright, bright, bright red flag.” If the company shipped software to such a distributor without addressing the red flags or getting a license, there could be a violation of the regulation, he said.

“An additional question is whether the distributors in China had knowledge that the software would be used to help develop a missile,” Wolf said. “If so, they could be liable because even foreign persons are required to comply with the U.S. export control rules when dealing with U.S.-origin items.”

Experts said U.S. exporters should not rely on Chinese resellers to conduct due diligence and obtain the licenses required. “If your distributor, frankly, is in China, take what they tell you with a grain of salt and ensure you do your own due diligence,” said Marwa Hassoun, a national security lawyer at ArentFox Schiff law firm who specializes in export controls.

Hifar did not respond to repeated requests for comment. The Post was unable to reach CAAA and other Chinese military groups named in this article.

David Habib, legal counsel for Metacomp, said the firm has “no knowledge of whether or how those companies have acquired Metacomp software or transferred it to others,” referring to CAAA and another military group that government contract awards show received the technology, as well as two Chinese intermediaries that, according to award notices, sold the software. He said the firm is “scrupulous in complying with U.S. export control laws and demands its customers comply as well.”

The Commerce Department, citing business confidentiality regulations, would not comment on any specific firm and whether it sought or was granted a license to export, or whether it was being investigated for a violation.

Both Zona and Metacomp have contracts for research and development services with the U.S. Air Force, according to federal documents. Defense Department contractors are required to comply with applicable export controls and sanctions or risk losing the contract or even being blacklisted as a contractor.

Both companies have received grants from the Pentagon’s Small Business Innovation Research program (SBIR), which awards money to help develop technologies that the department hopes one day will aid America’s own defense capabilities. Most of the SBIR-funded technologies are “dual use,” or have both civilian and military applications. Most SBIR contracts are for a three-month or up to two-year period, which covers the research and development phase and typically expires before the technologies go to market, according to officials at the Air Force, which runs the U.S. government’s largest SBIR program. Zona and Metacomp have received \$31.6 million and \$13.9 million, respectively, from the program, according to award records.

In a phone interview, Zona CEO Chen said he founded the company in 1988. In the mid-1990s, he said, with the help of SBIR grants, Zona began developing aeroelasticity software that is now marketed as Zaero and Zonair, the same technology that was sold through military supplier Hifar to CAAA.

A ‘technical blockade’

The Post’s analysis found that at least 50 purchasers in China were on Commerce’s Entity List. Several of the sales were made through China intermediaries such as Hifar that acknowledge supplying Chinese military clients, according to an examination of their websites.

Some transactions involved software from the most prominent American companies in commercial aerospace design technology.

In 2020, software made by the Pennsylvania firm Ansys Inc. was sold to the Beijing Institute of Technology (BIT) through a subsidiary of its Chinese partner, Pera Global, according to procurement documents and company filings.

BIT is one of China’s top defense universities, and was placed on the Entity List shortly before the sale occurred. In December, its research on the advanced physics of hypersonic vehicles was designated a “key research and development project” by China’s Science and Technology Ministry.

The Pera Global subsidiary, Beijing Iwintall Technology Co. Ltd., won the contract to sell Ansys technology to BIT, according to contract award documents. On its website, Iwintall states that the computer-aided engineering technology it sells helps Chinese researchers, including those involved in hypersonics, more quickly develop domestic versions of foreign technology that is currently restricted under a “technical blockade” by “developed” nations.

The software, Iwintall states, “can support research and development at a product’s conceptual design stage and greatly expand the innovative solutions.” The company also states that it has a “cooperation alliance” with Ansys, and lists BIT as a client.

Pera and its subsidiary did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

The Post reviewed procurement documents related to seven other sales since 2020 of Ansys technology to Chinese groups that are either on the export blacklist or have known missile links, including through three other Chinese intermediaries that had no apparent link to Pera Global. These groups include the National University of Defense Technology, which is on the Entity List, and the China Air to Air Missile Research Institute in Luoyang, which develops long-range, high-precision missiles.

In a statement to The Post, Ansys said it and its subsidiaries “have no records of the indicated sales or shipments of our software products to, nor have we authorized the end-use by, the National University of Defense Technology, Luoyang Air to Air Missile Research group, or the Beijing Institute of Technology.”

Ansys “is committed to complying with all applicable U.S. export control laws and regulations” and “maintain[s] a rigorous global trade compliance program,” it said. The company said, however, that software “piracy has unfortunately become an industry-wide problem,” suggesting that theft is one way the software might be winding up in the hands of unauthorized users.

Another major firm in this specialized industry is Siemens Digital Industries Software, an American unit of the German firm Siemens. Some of its software was purchased by the Beijing Institute of Technology in December 2020 through a Chinese reseller that is a Siemens partner, Transemic Information Technology Ltd., procurement documents show. The announcement that Transemic had won the contract for the sale was made a few days after the entity listing, according to a contract awards database. Beihang University, which like BIT is on Commerce’s blacklist, also purchased Siemens technology in 2021 through a different reseller, according to the documents.

Transemic, like Hifar, openly advertises its work with China’s military, and on its website said it is Siemens’s “first military industry partner” in China to pass the company’s certification process. It posted images of an August 2017 “Military Industry Digitization Seminar” it hosted for defense industry clients in Chengdu, which featured a speech from a Siemens China sales director.

Siemens declined to comment on its relationship with Transemic, the conference or sales to specific customers in China. In a statement, Siemens said it “is committed to compliance with applicable national export controls regimes. We monitor our customer base to facilitate compliance with these regulations and proactively and routinely discontinue selling our software portfolio to entities subject to U.S. government restrictions.”

Siemens Digital Industries Software announced an agreement in July to acquire Zona. In an email this month, Siemens said the sale was still pending. “All we can say at this time is all of our sales are governed by Siemens’ comprehensive export compliance practices and our commitment to comply with U.S. export laws,” the company said in a statement.

‘Controls need to be expanded’

A second Chinese scientist involved in hypersonics research said that foreign technology acquired by one military research institute or private military supplier often flows freely to other research institutes, circumventing commercial transactions with U.S. suppliers. “So if one [researcher] says, ‘Hey, I need some [software] for this project or this time period,’ it’s easy to share,” the scientist said.

The Post also found evidence of high-end optical hardware going to Chinese missile and military groups. Arizona-based 4D Technology Corp. makes interferometers — devices used to capture extremely accurate measurements in turbulent conditions. American researchers say they are used to gather data in hypersonic tests.

“There’s a bunch of different techniques in hypersonics where you use an interferometer to basically make measurements of turbulence and high-speed flow,” said Chris Combs, an assistant professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio who specializes in hypersonic aerodynamics and wind tunnel testing.

The company — which received more than \$2.5 million in Pentagon SBIR grants between 2010 and 2017, according to the program’s database — sold interferometer technology to the China Air to Air Missile

Research Institute in January through its China distributor Opturn Company Ltd., according to a notice posted by the institute. The institute is not on the Entity List.

4D and Opturn did not respond to requests for comment.

“It’s clear that controls need to be expanded for software and technology with uses in hypersonics,” said Ian Stewart, executive director of Middlebury College’s Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Washington. “More strategic entities need to be placed on the Entity List. And as a rule, sensitive goods or technology should never be sent to or sold through distributors.”

The use of American software is also documented in presentations at military industry conferences in China.

At a 2019 hypersonics conference in Inner Mongolia, a group of Chinese scientists listened to a Hifar Technologies representative give a keynote presentation on recent advances in Zona’s aeroelasticity software Zonair and Zaero, according to a participant and an event description posted on Hifar’s website.

The conference was hosted by the China Aerodynamics Research and Development Center, a secretive organization headed by a PLA general that houses 18 wind tunnels. CARD C, which is located in a zone off-limits to foreigners in Mianyang, a city in southwest China known for nuclear weapons research, was placed on the Entity List in 1999 for aiding missile proliferation.

Members of the Chinese Academy of Aerospace Aerodynamics — one of the groups behind the 2021 hypersonic test — were at the event, according to the participant. A month after the conference, the group purchased Zona aeroelasticity software through Hifar.

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HEADLINE	10/16 BBB: holiday décor shopping scams
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/money/bbb-washington-scam-shopping-holiday-decor/281-59b96081-c4b7-43ad-900b-5440b1c3094c
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — While many families fulfill holiday traditions by decorating their homes or lawns for Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas, scammers make it part of their routine to trick consumers into making misleading purchases.</p> <p>The Better Business Bureau of Washington said consumers are reporting to the BBB instances where they thought they ordered one item and received another long after the purchase was made.</p> <p>"They thought they ordered a giant seven-foot pumpkin head and a skeleton but after almost a month what they actually received was two rubber seven-inch dolls that sort of look like was advertised," said Logan Hickle, communications manager for the BBB of Washington. "We've seen this happen many times and often it ends up with that company not responding to the customer inquiry about that misleading online listing."</p> <p>To avoid forking over money for falsely advertised holiday décor deals, the BBB recommends doing research on online companies before making purchases, especially when it's a website you have never shopped before.</p> <p>Hickle said looking for the company's contact information is a first good step in verifying its legitimacy. "That should include things like a telephone number and email address, and preferably a physical address as well, Hickle said.</p> <p>Another step you should take is to search for reviews on the company in question.</p>

	<p>"You want to be wary of those deals that seem too good to be true," Hickle said. "Keep in mind these large decorations for holidays that involve special lights and technology - they're going to be more expensive - so if you find something amazing for cheap, it could be a scam."</p> <p>Another tip is to look out for ads on social media, especially after you've done some browsing on an item you're interested in.</p> <p>"You don't want to make these quick social purchases on social media," Hickle said. "These scam advertisers can track your habits from social media and then target you with specific products that they think you'll fall for, so don't buy anything on impulse while scrolling through your feed. Just because it passed as an advertisement through the social media platform's advertising team - that doesn't mean it's a legitimate deal."</p> <p>If you do fall for a holiday décor purchase scam - contact the financial institution you used to make the purchase. You may not always receive a refund but filing a report to dispute the charges is recommended.</p> <p>You can also track recent scams or report new ones by using the BBB Scam Tracker tool.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 China: self-reliance, state-led initiatives
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/16/world/asia/on-tech-xi-points-to-self-reliance-and-state-led-initiatives.html
GIST	<p>Just days after the United States hit China with sweeping new tech export controls, Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Sunday called for self-reliance and the need to win a battle over “key core technologies.”</p> <p>In his nearly two-hour address at the Communist Party congress, Mr. Xi emphasized the importance of technological innovation, but made strong indications that the state, not private industry, would guide key initiatives. Making only oblique references to broader tech clashes with the United States, he called for China to cultivate talent and fund basic scientific research as it seeks to increase its global competitiveness.</p> <p>“Xi didn’t quite frame China’s path forward as a competition between China and the West, but rather as a storm of external pressures to be weathered,” said Kendra Schaefer, head of tech policy at Trivium China, a research group.</p> <p>For China’s beleaguered internet industry, there was little indication that a series of strict new rules focused on cybersecurity, data protection and monopoly behavior would change.</p> <p>Mr. Xi praised the direction of the internet environment, noting that the “cyber ecology continued to improve.” It was a signal that strict censorship and the use of the internet to spread propaganda would not lessen.</p> <p>Five years ago, he called for developing a “market-oriented system for technological innovation.” This time, he focused on “national strategic needs,” a strong signal that the government will play the leading role in innovation initiatives going forward.</p> <p>Instead of the web, Mr. Xi focused on achievements elsewhere. He said that China had “joined the ranks of innovative countries,” but pointed mostly to state-backed projects, including manned spaceflight, aircraft manufacturing, biomedicine and supercomputing. In another nod to government-led innovation, he said China would move fast to launch major national projects that are strategic, big-picture and of long-term importance.</p> <p>Notably missing from Mr. Xi’s list of accomplishments were microchips, where China has struggled to achieve its goal of freeing itself from reliance on foreign countries. Although Mr. Xi said China would speed its efforts to build self-reliance, new United States rules restricting Chinese microchip and supercomputer firms’ access to key tech are likely to bite hard in the coming years, said Paul Triolo, senior vice president for China at Albright Stonebridge Group, a strategy firm.</p>

	<p>“Xi likely does not yet appreciate how serious the new U.S. moves are for China’s technology ambitions. When the leadership chooses to respond after the party congress, China could unleash some surprises of its own,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Australia police: extremists recruit gamers
SOURCE	https://www.afp.gov.au/news-media/media-releases/extremist-recruitment-reaching-young-australian-gamers
GIST	<p>The AFP is urging parents and guardians to be aware of their child’s online activities, with AFP investigators seeing evidence of extremist groups accessing popular online games in a bid to recruit young Australians.</p> <p>The AFP has seen a concerning trend of members and associates of extremist groups targeting young people to expose them to dangerous content - including violent recreations of actual terrorist events - across online gaming platforms.</p> <p>The AFP identified one instance of a young Australian who engaged with extremist content depicting a recreation of the 2019 Christchurch terrorist attack in a popular online game. The teen then allegedly shared the content across their social media channels.</p> <p>AFP Acting Assistant Commissioner Counter Terrorism and Special Investigations Command Sandra Booth said spreading extremist content in online gaming platforms was a serious concern for law enforcement agencies in Australia and around the world.</p> <p>“We know that nationalist, racist and violent extremist content in online games is almost certainly part of a radicalisation process for some young people,” she said.</p> <p>“There are a number of popular games that enable users to create scenarios and record them for others to re-watch and share online across social media.</p> <p>“Our concern is extremist groups are exploiting these platforms to target a very young group of Australia’s population, by creating content to share and encourage far-right/extremist ideologies and abhorrent violence against others.”</p> <p>Acting Assistant Commissioner Booth said Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremist groups using online games was a recent occurrence, but they and Religiously Motivated Violent Extremist groups had long used social media forums to push their agendas and spread propaganda.</p> <p>The AFP has seen far-right terrorism-related investigations increase from two per cent, prior to 2020, to about 15 per cent in 2022.</p> <p>The AFP and its law enforcement partners, through the Joint Counter Terrorism Teams, remain committed to identifying and disrupting anyone who attempts to incite violence and spread harmful messages through the Australian community.</p> <p>“We know the global environment we are working in is rapidly evolving. This requires the AFP and our law enforcement partners to continually adapt to changing threats and remain aware of the many pathways that radicalisation can take,” Act. AC Booth said.</p> <p>“We know individuals involved in extremist activities can come from a diverse range of social backgrounds and can be influenced by a range of complex factors. Countering these forms of violent extremism requires assistance from not only law enforcement, but from members of the public.”</p> <p>Act AC Booth said parents and guardians could play a significant role in preventing extremist groups from preying on young Australians via online games.</p>

	<p>“Prevention is the best option we have as a community. We encourage parents and guardians to take time to speak to their children, understand the games they may be accessing, what scenarios they may involve and who they may be interacting with in those games,” she said.</p> <p>“It is critical parents and guardians help their children to understand this extremist ideology and violence online has an impact in the real world and is not, and will not be, tolerated in our society.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/14 Microsoft disputes Office 365 ECB issue
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/microsoft-disputes-report-on-office-365-message-encryption-issue-after-awarding-bug-bounty/
GIST	<p>Microsoft is denying reports from a cybersecurity firm that there are issues within the Microsoft Office 365’s Electronic Codebook (ECB) message encryption mode.</p> <p>Microsoft Office 365 allows users to send and receive encrypted messages when ECB mode is enabled.</p> <p>On Friday, WithSecure published a report outlining how this mode is “generally insecure” and can leak information about the structure of the messages sent, which can lead to partial or full message disclosure.</p> <p>“Since the encrypted messages are sent as regular email attachments, the messages sent may be stored in various email systems, and may have been intercepted by any party between the sender and the recipient,” WithSecure researchers said.</p> <p>WithSecure security researcher Harry Sintonen said attackers who are able to get their hands on a trove of messages can use the leaked ECB info to decode the encrypted content.</p> <p>“More emails make this process easier and more accurate, so it’s something attackers can perform after getting their hands on e-mail archives stolen during a data breach, or by breaking into someone’s email account, e-mail server or gaining access to backups,” he said.</p> <p>The company approached Microsoft about the issue on January 11 and was paid a \$5,000 bug bounty on January 19. But when they contacted the tech giant in May about whether the issue was being resolved, they said they received no response.</p> <p>WithSecure told Microsoft it planned to publish a report about the problem in August and the company responded on September 21, arguing that the report “was not considered meeting the bar for security servicing, nor is it considered a breach.”</p> <p>“No code change was made and so no CVE was issued for this report,” Microsoft allegedly told the company.</p> <p>When asked about the report, Microsoft told The Record that its implementation of ECB encryption supports legacy applications and noted that it is working towards alternative encryption protocols for future product versions.</p> <p>But a spokesperson said the feature is intended as a tool to prevent accidental misuse and is not a security boundary.</p> <p>“To help prevent abuse we recommend customers follow best security practices, including keeping systems up to date, enabling multi-factor authentication, and using a real time anti-malware product,” the spokesperson said.</p> <p>WithSecure defended its report, explaining that the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) recently said the use of ECB to encrypt confidential information “constitutes a severe security vulnerability,” pointing to CVE-2020-11500 — a similar issue related to Zoom’s use of ECB.</p>

Sintonen explained that an attacker that has a massive database of messages may be able to deduce the content by analyzing patterns within them.

The attack can be performed offline on any previously sent, received or intercepted encrypted messages, he added, noting that there is no way for the organization to prevent analysis of already sent messages.

WithSecure claimed the issue may also “lead to privacy impact as described in EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), State of California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA), or some other similar legislation.”

“Any organization with personnel that used OME [open messaging environment] to encrypt emails are basically stuck with this problem. For some, such as those that have confidentiality requirements put into contracts or local regulations, this could create some issues,” Sintonen said.

“And then of course, there’s questions about the impact this data could have in the event it’s actually stolen, which makes it a significant concern for organizations.”

Sintonen and WithSecure recommended that Microsoft users avoid using the system as a way to send confidential emails.

‘High severity’

Cybersecurity experts were split on whether the issue was as serious as described by WithSecure.

Vulcan Cyber’s Mike Parkin argued that while it would be ideal for encrypted traffic to not reveal anything about the contents of the message, most business users won’t be affected by the level of data leakage here, “unless they are in the habit of sending highly sensitive, and time sensitive, information through Office 365.”

Bud Broomhead, CEO at cybersecurity firm Viakoo, told The Record that even if Microsoft declines to fix this, it should at least remove or restrict the use of message encryption within Office 365 until a better solution is available to users.

“Hard to see a ‘feature’ aspect of this; clearly it’s a bug of high severity,” he said.

“For many years the fear has been that encrypted data that was previously exfiltrated may someday be decrypted and exploited. For threat actors who have harvested large amounts of encrypted Microsoft Office 365 email messages that day may be today. (Didn’t have to wait for quantum computing to unlock all those secrets!).”

Others, like Coalfire Vice President Andrew Barratt, said an attacker would need to first conduct relatively difficult offline attacks to gain access to documents and explained that the return on investment for the intruder would be quite limited.

Theon Technology’s Bryan Cunningham took a broader look at the issue, arguing that regardless of the accuracy of WithSecure’s claims, there are now severe risks that all organizations and individuals face when using any encryption technology because of advances in quantum and mathematical techniques.

Cunningham explained that encryption methods have long been fallible, pointing back to U.S. agencies’ ability to decrypt messages from the Soviet Union.

“Also, any encryption scheme can be defeated even without breaking the code if users do not handle keys properly or are successfully phished, among other attack techniques,” he said. “No one can prevent all attacks, but sufficiently hardened encrypted data at rest is much less likely to be made usable in the future – even if it is stolen.”

HEADLINE	10/14 Report: China growing cyberthreat to US
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/report-china-cyberattacks-past/
GIST	<p>Chinese state-sponsored cyberattacks pose a growing threat to US national security, according to a report from consultancy firm Booz Allen Hamilton released on October 12, 2022.</p> <p>The report, Same Cloak, More Dagger: Decoding How the People's Republic of China (PRC) Uses Cyber Attacks, is addressed to CISOs of American companies and their allies as well as threat analysts. It offers a comprehensive analysis of more than 13 case studies of Chinese-sponsored cyberattacks over the past decade to understand “the conditions that ignite PRC cyber offensives,” which will allow organizations to “better anticipate when, where, and how those attacks may occur” and “ensure they are ready to defend against them.”</p> <p>The case studies are divided into two groups, each sub-divided into two themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats to domestic interests: ‘Foreign Information Threats’ and ‘The Hong Kong Democracy Movement’ • Threats to foreign interests: ‘Competing South China Sea Claims’ and ‘Indo-Pacific Competition’ <p>“[Their findings] show that China is developing and deploying cyberattack capabilities to advance its national ‘core interests.’ These cyberattacks complement China’s better known, increasingly assertive, and diverse attempts to advance its interests online through legal, financial, cultural, political, and technical means.”</p> <p>However, Booz Allen added that the report was exclusively based on open-source research. “The true measure of China’s cyberattack capabilities [...] likely cannot be fully discerned in open sources. It is possible China has chosen to not deploy its full capabilities or it has done so without public attribution,” reads the report.</p> <p>On top of the case studies, the report provides an overview of Chinese security and intelligence agencies, an assessment of their motives, a timeline of Chinese cyber activity since 1993, a catalog of threat actors and their common tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) as well as recommendations for CISOs and threat analysts.</p>
Return to Top	<p>Click on link to download copy of report: ‘China’s cyberattack strategy explained’</p> <p>https://www.boozallen.com/insights/cyber/chinas-cyberattack-strategy-explained.html</p>

HEADLINE	10/14 Education sector faces 44% rise in attacks
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/education-experienced-44-increase/
GIST	<p>The education sector experienced a 44% increase in cyber-attacks when compared to 2021, with an average of 2297 attacks against organizations every week, according to Check Point’s <i>2022 Mid-Year Report</i>.</p> <p>The research paper suggests that part of the appeal is the sheer number of personal details that threat actors can obtain by targeting organizations in this sector.</p> <p>“Academic institutions are currently sitting ducks,” said Deryck Mitchelson, field CISO at Check Point, commenting on the new data.</p> <p>“Our research team’s monthly threat index has found education to be the most impacted sector for the whole of 2022. It’s clear that cyber-criminals are finding these attacks fruitful, and schools and colleges should be preparing for the rate of these attacks to increase even further.”</p> <p>In fact, while most companies only have employees, academic institutions don’t just have teachers and lecturers; they also have students, making networks in the sector much bigger, more open and more difficult to protect.</p>

	<p>“Students are not employees; they use their own devices, work from shared flats, and connect to free WiFi without necessarily thinking about the security risks. This combination of a lack of understanding and ignorance has contributed to the perfect storm, giving hackers a free run,” he said.</p> <p>“A ransomware attack should not just be seen as an inconvenience; it could potentially result in a school being closed down, as was the case with Lincoln College that we saw earlier this year.”</p> <p>However, Mitchelson also added that there are technologies that can allow universities, colleges and schools to be more secure without disrupting student education.</p> <p>“By choosing to adopt a prevent-first approach and by integrating best practices such as network segmentation, multi-factor authentication and endpoint security, academic institutions can begin to fight back against malicious cyber-criminals,” he concluded.</p> <p>The Check Point report comes weeks after ESET revealed the advanced persistent threat (APT) SparklingGoblin targeted a Hong Kong university in February 2021 using a Linux variant of the SideWalk backdoor.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/14 Australia police secret agents exposed
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/australian-police-secret-agents-exposed-in-colombian-data-leak/
GIST	<p>Identities of secret agents working for the Australian Federal Police (AFP) have been exposed after hackers leaked documents stolen from the Colombian government.</p> <p>The leak comes from a hacktivist group called Guacamaya and includes more than five terabytes of classified data, including emails, documents, and methods AFP agents were using to stop drug cartels from running their business in Australia.</p> <p>Details exposed this way are from 35 AFP operations, some of them still active, and also include surveillance reports from agents, phone tap recordings, and payroll data for Colombian officers.</p> <p>The AFP is not the only law enforcement agency collaborating with the Colombian government so police agencies from other countries are likely to be affected.</p> <p>AFP confirmed the exposure to 'The Sydney Morning Herald' sharing the following statement: <i>The AFP is concerned about possible breaches of operational security as a consequence of this data compromise.</i></p> <p><i>The AFP is working with our partners in impacted regions to mitigate any potential threats to the safety of people, or ongoing investigations.</i></p> <p>Guacamaya hackers Guacamaya describes itself as a hacktivist group fighting against repressive and corrupt regimes in Latin America.</p> <p>In September, Guacamaya announced they had victimized multiple Latin American state, military, and law enforcement agencies and shared the data with a whistleblower news site.</p> <p>The site shared data samples with the wider public and provided the entire collection only to journalists. However, there is no way to verify if the hackers distributed the leak with other parties.</p>

	<p>Among the victims are the Chilean Armed Forces, the Peruvian Army, the Joint Command of the Armed Forces of Peru, the Armed Forces of El Salvador, the National Civil Police of El Salvador, the Secretariat of National Defense of Mexico, and the General Command of the Military Forces of Colombia.</p> <p>The hack that compromised AFP targeted the Office of the Attorney General of Colombia, an AFP partner that enabled carrying out undercover operations in Australia to fight drug trafficking and importation channels in the country.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/14 CISA releases open-source tool 'RedEye'
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/cisa-releases-open-source-redeye-c2-log-visualization-tool/
GIST	<p>The U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security (CISA) agency has announced RedEye, an open-source analytic tool for operators to visualize and report command and control (C2) activity.</p> <p>RedEye is for both red and blue teams, providing an easy way to gauge data that leads to practical decisions.</p> <p>Assessing attack campaigns</p> <p>A joint project from CISA and DOE's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, RedEye can parse logs from attack frameworks (e.g. Cobalt Strike) to present complex data in a more digestible format.</p> <p>The tool allows users to upload campaign data to view relevant information such as beacons and commands.</p> <p>Historical records of each campaign logs loaded into RedEye can be viewed in a graphical representation that correlates servers and hosts involved.</p> <p>Analysts can also explore key events in a selected campaign to discover payload activity and follow an attacker's penetration path, such as lateral movement activity or the use of credentials to increase privileges on a machine.</p> <p>The features available in RedEye allow analysts to comment on the attacker's activity for better collaboration and understanding of the attack path.</p> <p>Using the comments from analysts and the techniques used in the campaign, RedEye can also generate presentations that can be shared with stakeholders and clients.</p> <p>All data collected from a campaign and the comments from analysts can be exported so clients can review</p> <p>Blue teams can also use RedEye to understand easier the raw data received from an assessment, and view the attack path and the compromised hosts so they can take appropriate action.</p> <p>At the moment, RedEye can parse logs from the Cobalt Strike framework.</p> <p>It has been tested to work on Linux (Ubuntu 18 and above, Kali Linux 2020.1 or newer), macOS (El Capitan and above), and Windows 7 or newer.</p> <p>The tool is available on GitHub, in CISA's repository.</p> <p>RedEye is the latest in a set of tools that CISA released as open-source projects over the past few years.</p> <p>Among them are Malcom - a network traffic analysis tool, ICS NPP - a tool for parsing Industrial Control Systems Network Protocols, Sparrow - a PowerShell script for detecting possible compromised accounts and apps in Azure and Microsoft 365 environments.</p>

Return to Top	The tool is available on GitHub , in CISA's repository.
HEADLINE	10/16 Google search crashes on specific terms
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/technology/google-search-crashes-when-you-ask-how-many-emojis-on-apple/
GIST	<p>Google Search is timing out when users search for specific terms like "How many emojis on iOS," "How many emojis on Apple" and "How many emojis on Windows."</p> <p>BleepingComputer was able to reproduce the issue on both Google search sites and the mobile app. We observed server errors when looking up these terms, without any quotes or punctuation.</p> <p>A freeze emoji!</p> <p>Google Search is throwing a server error....after timing out as users search for phrases like "how many emojis on iOS" or "How many emojis on Apple" (no quotes).</p> <p>The issue was originally thought to be impacting a country-specific domain, Google.co.nz when reported by YCombinator Hacker News user <i>wfme</i>.</p> <p>However, keen commentators quickly pointed out that Google.com was also impacted, as further confirmed by BleepingComputer.</p> <p>Another user, <i>llui85</i> compiled a list of some phrases that seem to be triggering the issue on Google search, when entered in the search bar without quotes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "how many emojis on ios" 2. "how many emojis on apple" 3. "how many emojis on windows" 4. "how many emojis on lumia" 5. "how many emojis lumia" 6. "how many ios emoji" - working (albeit slowly) 7. "how many emojis in ios" 8. "how many emojis inside ios" <p>"I'd hazard that a specific web page appearing in the results is probably causing this error - I would be very curious to find out which page this is," suspects the user, who after looking up the following term seems even more convinced that a particular .com site is causing the issue:</p> <p><i>how many emojis on ios site:com</i></p> <p>Reddit user <i>gottago_gottago</i> suspects the culprit is Emojipedia.com, as searching for this domain name directly in Google breaks the search.</p> <p>The behavior is also being exhibited by the Google Search Android app...</p> <p>BleepingComputer has reached out to Google prior to publishing to understand the root cause of the issue and we are waiting to hear back.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/15 VMware ESXi servers reached end-of-life
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/over-45-000-vmware-esxi-servers-just-reached-end-of-life/
GIST	<p>Over 45,000 VMware ESXi servers inventoried by Lansweeper just reached end-of-life (EOL), with VMware no longer providing software and security updates unless companies purchase an extended support contract.</p> <p>Lansweeper develops asset management and discovery software that allows customers to track what hardware and software they are running on their network.</p>

As of October 15, 2022, VMware ESXi 6.5 and VMware ESXi 6.7 reached end-of-life and will only receive technical support but no security updates, putting the software at risk of vulnerabilities.

The company analyzed data from 6,000 customers and found 79,000 installed VMware ESXi servers.

Of those servers, 36.5% (28,835) run version 6.7.0, released in April 2018, and 21.3% (16,830) are on version 6.5.0, released in November 2016. In total, there are 45,654 VMware ESXi servers reaching End of Life as of today

The findings of Lansweeper are alarming because apart from the 57% that enter a period of elevated risk, there are also another 15.8% installations that run even older versions, ranging from 3.5.0 to 5.5.0, which reached EOL quite some time ago.

In summary, right now, only about one out of four ESXi servers (26.4%) inventoried by Lansweeper are still supported and will continue to receive regular security updates until April 02, 2025.

However, in reality, the number of VMware servers reaching EOL today, is likely far greater, as this report is based only on Lansweeper's customers.

The technical guidance for ESXi 6.5 and 6.7 will carry on until November 15, 2023, but this concerns implementation issues, not including security risk mitigation.

The only way to ensure you can continue to use older versions securely is to apply for the two-year extended support, which needs to be purchased separately. However, this does not include updates for third-party software packages.

For more details about EOL dates on all VMware software products, [check out this webpage](#).

What does this mean?

When a software product reaches the end-of-life date, it stops receiving regular security updates. This means that admins should have already planned ahead and upgraded all deployments to a newer release.

While it's not unlikely that VMware will still offer some critical security patches for these older versions, it's not guaranteed and certainly won't release patches for all new vulnerabilities that are discovered.

Once an unsupported ESXi server has carried on for long enough without patches, it will have accumulated so many security vulnerabilities that attackers would have multiple ways to breach it.

Due to ESXi hosting virtual machines, attacking the server can potentially cause severe and wide-scale disruption to business operations, which is why ransomware gangs are so focused on targeting it.

This year, ESXi VMs were targeted by the likes of [Black Basta](#), [RedAlert](#), [GwisinLocker](#), [Hive](#), and the [Cheers](#) ransomware gangs.

More recently, Mandiant discovered that hackers found [a new method](#) to establish persistence on VMware ESXi hypervisors that lets them control the server and hosted VMs without being detected.

All that said, ESXi already enjoys ample attention from threat actors, so running outdated and vulnerable versions of the software would no doubt be a terrible idea.

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HEADLINE	10/14 Dutch police trick DeadBolt: fake payments
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/police-tricks-deadbolt-ransomware-out-of-155-decryption-keys/?&web_view=true

The Dutch National Police, in collaboration with cybersecurity firm Responders.NU, tricked the DeadBolt ransomware gang into handing over 155 decryption keys by faking ransom payments.

[DeadBolt](#) is a ransomware operation active since January and known for demanding 0.03 bitcoin ransoms after encrypting thousands of QNAP and Asustor Network Attached Storage (NAS) devices (20,000 worldwide and at least 1,000 in the Netherlands per the Dutch police.)

After the ransom is paid, DeadBolt creates a bitcoin transaction to the same bitcoin ransom address containing a decryption key for the victim (the decryption key can be found under the transaction's OP_RETURN output).

When the victim enters this key into the ransom note screen, it will be converted into a SHA256 hash and compared to the SHA256 hash of the victim's decryption key and the SHA256 hash of the DeadBolt master decryption key.

If the decryption key matches one of the SHA256 hashes, the encrypted files on the NAS hard drives will get decrypted.

"The police paid, received the decryption keys, and then withdrew the payments. These keys allow files such as treasured photos or administration to be unlocked again, at no cost to victims," according to a [news release](#) published Friday.

Ransomware gang tricked at its own game

As Responders.NU security expert [Rickey Gevers](#) told BleepingComputer, the police tricked the ransomware gang into releasing the keys by canceling the transactions before they were included in a block.

"So we made transactions with a minimum fee. And since we knew that the attacker would find out one moment, we had to smash and grab," Gevers said.

"The attacker found out within several minutes, but we were able to grab 155 keys. 90% of the victims who reported the deadbolt attack to the police. So most of them got the decryption key for free.

When a victim makes a ransom payment to the DeadBolt operation, the operation automatically sends a decryption key when it detects the bitcoin transaction with the correct ransom amount.

However, the decryption key is sent immediately without waiting for a [bitcoin confirmation](#) that the bitcoin transaction is legitimate.

This allowed the Dutch Police and [Responders.NU](#) to create ransom payments with a low fee at a time when the Bitcoin blockchain was heavily congested.

Heavy congestion combined with a low fee caused the Bitcoin blockchain to take much longer to confirm a transaction, allowing the Police to make a transaction, receive the key, and immediately [cancel their bitcoin transaction](#).

This tactic effectively allowed them to obtain the 155 decryption keys without paying anything more than the fees to send the transactions.

Unfortunately, after realizing they were tricked and won't get paid, the DeadBolt ransomware gang switched things up and now require double confirmation before releasing decryption keys.

Responders.NU also created a platform (in collaboration with the Dutch Police and Europol) where DeadBolt victims who haven't filed a police report or couldn't be identified can check if their decryption key is among the ones obtained from the ransomware gang.

	<p>"Through the website deadbolt.responders.nu, victims can easily check if their key is also available and follow the unlocking instructions," Gevers added.</p> <p>DeadBolt ransomware has made a lot of victims and has targeted QNAP customers in waves since the start of the year, as shown by QNAP asking users to keep their devices up to date and not expose them online multiple times [1, 2, 3, 4].</p>
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HEADLINE	10/14 Microsoft: Prestige targets Ukraine, Poland
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/microsoft-new-prestige-ransomware-targets-orgs-in-ukraine-poland/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Microsoft says new Prestige ransomware is being used to target transportation and logistics organizations in Ukraine and Poland in ongoing attacks.</p> <p>This new ransomware was first used in the wild on October 11, in attacks detected within an hour of each other.</p> <p>Attackers were seen deploying the ransomware payloads across their victims' enterprise networks, a tactic very rarely seen in attacks targeting Ukrainian organizations.</p> <p>"The activity shares victimology with recent Russian state-aligned activity, specifically on affected geographies and countries, and overlaps with previous victims of the FoxBlade malware (also known as HermeticWiper)," the Microsoft Threat Intelligence Center (MSTIC) said.</p> <p>HermeticWiper is destructive malware known as a wiper that was first seen deployed against Ukrainian organizations right before the start of the invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>"This activity was not connected to any of the 94 currently active ransomware activity groups that Microsoft tracks. The Prestige ransomware had not been observed by Microsoft prior to this deployment," MSTIC added.</p> <p>At the moment, Microsoft is yet to link the Prestige ransomware attacks to a specific threat actor and is temporarily tracking this activity cluster as DEV-0960.</p> <p>Redmond is working on notifying all customers who have been compromised and had their systems encrypted with this ransomware.</p> <p>Multiple ransomware deployment methods</p> <p>The threat group behind these ransomware attacks uses several methods to deploy the payloads across the victims' networks, even though this technique switch is not necessarily prompted by security measures taken by defenders to block them.</p> <p>In the report, MSTIC highlights the following three methods used for Prestige ransomware deployment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Method 1: The ransomware payload is copied to the ADMIN\$ share of a remote system, and Impacket is used to remotely create a Windows Scheduled Task on target systems to execute the payload • Method 2: The ransomware payload is copied to the ADMIN\$ share of a remote system, and Impacket is used to remotely invoke an encoded PowerShell command on target systems to execute the payload • Method 3: The ransomware payload is copied to an Active Directory Domain Controller and deployed to systems using the Default Domain Group Policy Object <p>Once deployed, Prestige ransomware payloads will drop ransom notes named "README.txt" in the root directory of each drive it encrypts.</p>

	<p>It encrypts files based on extensions matching a predefined list and adds the .enc extension at the end of the files' names after encryption.</p> <p>It uses the CryptoPP C++ library to AES-encrypt each matching file on compromised systems, and it will delete the backup catalog and all volume shadow copies to hinder recovery efforts.</p> <p>Microsoft shared a list of indicators of compromise (IOCs) and advanced hunting queries to help defenders detect and mitigate Prestige ransomware attacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/14 India power company confirms cyberattack
SOURCE	https://techcrunch.com/2022/10/14/india-power-company-tata-power-cyber-attack/
GIST	<p>Tata Power, a leading power generation company in India, has confirmed it was hit by a cyberattack.</p> <p>In a brief statement released on Friday, the Mumbai-based company said that the attack impacted some of its IT systems.</p> <p>“The company has taken steps to retrieve and restore the systems. All critical operational systems are functioning; however, as a measure of abundant precaution, restricted access and preventive checks have been put in place for employee and customer-facing portals and touchpoints,” it said in its filing (PDF) with local stock exchanges.</p> <p>Tata Power did not share any further specifics on the matter. When asked by TechCrunch, a PR representative refused to answer questions related to the nature of the attack and its impact on the organization, and declined to say whether any data was stolen. “As stated in the Statement, the Company has taken steps to retrieve and restore the systems. All critical operational systems are functioning,” the representative said.</p> <p>The company generates, transmits and retails power in the South Asian nation and aims to double the share of clean energy in its portfolio to 60% in five years from about a third now, with a target to become net zero by 2045. It claims to have an installed and managed electricity generation capacity of 13,974MW, which is the highest in the country.</p> <p>In the recent past, Tata Power has also shown interest in growing its business through rooftop solar and microgrids, storage solutions, solar pumps, EV charging infrastructure and home automation. The company serves more than 12 million consumers via its distributor companies.</p> <p>The Indian government has highlighted the cybersecurity of the country’s nationwide electricity network as a challenge in its public statements. A report by U.S.-based cybersecurity company Recorded Future in April alleged that Chinese state-sponsored hackers had targeted the Indian power sector in a long-term project. The Ministry of External Affairs of India spokesperson Arindam Bagchi responded to that report and said the country had not raised this issue with China, according to a media report. China’s foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian reportedly refuted the allegation.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/14 Qualify for discounted internet service?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/10/14/how-to-sign-up-acp-internet-discount/
GIST	<p>Housing. Food. Even pet care. Thanks to some of the worst inflation we’ve seen in decades, it feels like almost everything is more expensive than it should be.</p> <p>If you or someone you know has been struggling financially or if someone in your household receive certain kinds of government benefits, you might be owed a discount on your internet bill.</p> <p>For many families, that means savings of \$30/month. And for those living on tribal lands, that discount is as high as \$75/month.</p>

These price breaks come courtesy of the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program, which [launched earlier this year](#) to try to narrow the country's digital divide. And even if you don't benefit from the program directly, you could be doing someone in your life a real favor by letting them know the ACP exists, so take minute with us to learn how it works.

Thankfully, the process boils down to three steps.

1. Find out if you qualify

There are a few ways you might qualify for the ACP. Your household could come in below a specific income level, for example. A family of four in the continental United States bringing in less than \$55,500 a year qualifies for the discount. If you or someone in your household is on Medicaid, gets a veterans pension, or received a Pell Grant to go to college this year, you also get a discount.

To see the full list of qualifiers, visit the [Affordable Connectivity Program](#) website.

This is also a good time to make sure your internet provider — or one you'd like to use — participates in the program. Most big-name internet service providers participate in the ACP, including Verizon, AT&T, and Xfinity, but smaller, more regional companies may not.

The best way to check is to visit [this website created by the Universal Service Administrative Company](#), the organization that actually runs the program. Unfortunately, we've encountered situations where that site doesn't load any results even when there are participating companies in a specific area — if that happens to you, try calling the internet provider directly.

2. Fill out an application

If you qualify for the ACP — or want to double-check that you do — visit the Affordable Connectivity Program website to start working on an application. (Don't worry: You don't need to print and mail a form unless you really want to.)

That online form asks for things like your name, address, and a way to verify your identity — think the last four digits of your Social Security Number, or another form of official ID. Depending on how you qualify, you may be asked to provide other information like proof of income.

3. Contact your internet provider

Once your ACP application is approved by the USAC, you're nearly home free. Now you just have to contact your internet provider to activate that monthly discount. In some cases, you can do that right on your provider's website, but a phone call to its customer service line will do the trick, too.

One more thing to keep in mind: Some of these companies also offer low-cost internet plans designed for use with the ACP discount, which means you or someone you know may be able to get online for free (or close to it).

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Terrorism, Extremism

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HEADLINE	10/16 Taliban use Twitter to spread propaganda
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/the-talibans-use-of-twitter-as-a-tool-to-spread-their-voice/
GIST	According to the principle of realism described by Noam Chomsky in his book Propaganda and the Public Mind , those who control the media essentially have control of the public mind. In the age of globalisation with information technology ruling the post-modern society, interest groups have already realised the significance of providing relevant information to the target group for security, popular support and votes. Social media provides popular spaces where the desired interpretations of symbols

	<p>and narratives are constructed for public outreach. Propaganda, as Lippmann describes it, is “a regular organ of popular rule,” not exclusively limited to the use of the state. Hence, the Taliban, one of the major militant groups in Afghanistan, have effectively been using Twitter to spread their voice to the world and build popular support.</p> <p>During their first rule from 1996-2001, the Taliban had not adapted to using new digital technologies. However, in the post-9/11 era, they have increasingly used technology and social media to spread propaganda worldwide, particularly concentrated in Afghanistan. The Taliban started using Twitter in 2011 when an exchange of words was reported between International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) officials and Taliban representative Abdul Qahar Balkhi, who now serves as the Taliban Foreign Ministry spokesperson.</p>
Return to Top	Read more at the Global Network on Extremism & Technology

HEADLINE	10/16 ISIS magazine features bid for unity
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/isis-depicts-their-flag-raised-at-iwo-jima-memorial-in-bid-for-unity/
GIST	<p>The latest issue of the English-language magazine produced by ISIS in the Afghanistan region features a silhouette of the Iwo Jima Memorial and depicts the ISIS flag being raised instead of the American flag.</p> <p>The image in <i>Voice of Khurasan</i>, published by ISIS Khorasan Province’s Al Azaim Foundation for Media Production, is used to illustrate an article about rejecting attempts “to inject the virus of divisions among our ranks” and “uniting the scattered ummah [Muslim community].”</p> <p>“On one hand, kuffar [disbelievers] have been dividing this nation into many branches with empty chants of nationalism, patriotism, socialism, and so on, and on the other hand, they have been putting discords among the common Muslims regarding the matters of the religion,” the article states. “They want this Ummah to remain divided, as it is secret formula of their safety.”</p> <p>While arguing that an ISIS caliphate would unite all Muslims, the article decries “many factions raising the empty chants of jihad and Shar’iah, and shedding crocodile tears for the Ummah, lamenting the disunity of the Ummah and exhibiting some empty attempts for addressing such disunity.”</p> <p>The same magazine issue discusses some reasons why Muslims are “staying away from jihad,” and claims some potential jihadists are “lacking attributes of manliness.”</p> <p>“When a man owns the qualities of women and children, he prefers staying at home like the women and children, but when a man owns the attributes of manliness, he can’t tolerate shamelessness for a moment thinking of his sister filling the dark chambers of prisons of the filthy disbelievers and the sacred soil of the Islamic lands being trampled by the unclean footsteps of the infidels,” the magazine states.</p> <p>Another reason “behind the abandonment of jihad by many pious men and mujahidin,” ISIS-K claims, is “trials due to wife and children.”</p> <p>“Children cause a father to be stingy and heartless, because the person is prevented from fighting in the path of Allah for the love of his children, and for the sake of the children he withholds his property from other people,” the magazine says.</p> <p>Last month, <i>Voice of Khurasan</i> referenced the August execution of a search warrant at Mar-a-Lago and the reactions of former President Trump and Donald Trump Jr. in declaring that the United States has descended into a “banana republic” ripe for an “Islamic storm” in the terror group’s favor.</p> <p>The terror group claimed that “failure in the domestic level” was “the direct outcome” of international security expenditures “especially on the Muslims,” and predicted that citizens living under “severe frustration... looking for a way out from their predicament” could convert in “an Islamic storm.”</p>

“And preventing the repeat of Islamic history on the US soil is far beyond the capacity of the impotent and arrogant US politicians,” ISIS-K added. “And the wind of change can clearly be felt.”

The terror group has recently sounded off on other U.S. domestic matters. In the July *Voice of Khurasan* [issue](#), ISIS-K called mass shootings and other gun violence in America “tit for tat” and an “‘unwanted’ population control program” that, despite the motives of white supremacist or grievance-driven domestic shooters, is divine retribution for the U.S. war on terror.

After citing gun violence statistics, the article revealed ISIS’ ideological motive in expressing concern about mass shootings committed by perpetrators other than their own operatives, declaring that America “never considered that their pointless war on Islam, in the name of ‘war on terror,’ will be answered in a divinely dictated way, when a shooter having nothing to do with Islam and ‘radicalization’ (in their words) welcomes a mass gathering of US civilians with several rounds of automatic rifle, scoring death toll like the ‘zombies’ do in video games.”

“The Americans will be paid back in such a divine way, from the Lord of the worlds, until they step back from their bellicose foreign policy,” the article concluded.

In a May [issue](#), the magazine invoked recent hot-button elements of the culture war and talking points arising from debate over issues including sex education, LGBT acceptance and the teaching of evolution as the group argued that “democracy and all that emanates from it is retarded and perverse” and attempted to woo recruits to their extremism.

“These democracies teach children, as young as six, about sex and sexually transmitted diseases as part of their curriculum, together with drug abuse in order to prevent the new generation from being influenced by the widespread ills of their societies,” the ISIS-K article said. “There is a culture of free mixing in the educational institutions where they are encouraged to learn, try and test sexual activities between themselves. Homosexuality is taught as something that is normal and part of the genetic makeup and that we should be tolerant of people of such tendencies. The education is secular taught from the angle of atheism using insane and refuted ideas, such as evolution, to try and fill the void.”

“Do you really want to live in a society that has no bounds allowing and tolerating all possible views and practices?” the terror group said.

ISIS-K has also published an [article](#) promoting the spread of disinformation as a “duty” of jihadists in order to deceive and ultimately divide their foes and a tactic that should be considered “part of the war policy,” as well as a [piece](#) urging a concerted focus on “social media warfare” as critical to advancing on the ideological battlefield and countering the pull of “enchanted” social media influencers.

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HEADLINE	10/15 Somalia warns: don't payoff militants
SOURCE	https://www.voanews.com/a/somalia-warns-traders-not-to-pay-off-islamist-militants/6791421.html
GIST	<p>MOGADISHU, SOMALIA — Somalia’s government Saturday threatened to sanction businesses that pay extortion money to al-Shabab, looking to choke a lucrative cash pipeline the Islamist militants use to fund a deadly insurgency.</p> <p>Somalia's ministry of commerce and industry said the full force of the law would be brought against traders who pay the al-Qaida ally, which experts say raises millions of dollars through a complex and extensive taxation system.</p> <p>The ministry said any business found to have paid or collaborated with al-Shabab in any way would "face legal action" including having their government-issued trading permits revoked.</p> <p>"Any merchant who obeys instructions issued by the terrorists, and pays them income, will never be allowed to do business in Somalia again," the ministry said in a letter to traders.</p>

"Any company found to involve members of al-Shabab, or that sponsors their merchandise, will have their property including real estate confiscated by the government."

Al-Shabab has been trying to overthrow the central government in Mogadishu for more than 15 years and regularly stages deadly bombings and armed attacks on civilian and military targets.

Despite an international effort to degrade the group, the militants control swaths of countryside, and use threats of violence to collect taxes in territory under their jurisdiction.

The group taxes real estate, road cargo at checkpoints and slaps customs on imports passing through the capital's main port, according to a 2020 report by the Mogadishu-based Hiraal Institute.

The think tank then estimated al-Shabab raised at least \$15 million a month, rivalling the government's own tax collection efforts.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has vowed all-out war on al-Shabab and the warning to traders comes as the armed forces, backed by local militias and international allies, wage an aggressive counter-insurgency campaign.

The jihadis have staged a series of attacks in recent months, with a triple bombing in the city of Beledweyne this month killing 30 people, and a hotel siege in Mogadishu leaving 21 dead in August.

The government has announced a crackdown on media outlets that publish what it deems propaganda for al-Shabab and warned that offenders would be punished.

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HEADLINE	10/16 Mozambique jihadi violence spreads
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/africa-mozambique-maputo-82de8a3cccb02f30080d7da44709cb82
GIST	<p>NANJUA, Mozambique (AP) — Fleeing beheadings, shootings, rapes and kidnappings, nearly 1 million people are displaced by the Islamic extremist insurgency in northern Mozambique.</p> <p>The 5-year wave of jihadi violence in Cabo Delgado province has killed more than 4,000 people and scuppered international investments worth billions of dollars.</p> <p>In a sprawl of dilapidated tents and thatched huts around Nanjua, a small town in the southern part of Cabo Delgado province, several hundred families are seeking safety from the violence. They say their conditions are bleak and food assistance is meager but they're afraid to return home because of continuing violence by the rebels who are now going by the name Islamic State Mozambique Province.</p> <p>More than 1,000 miles south, however, government officials in the capital Maputo are saying the insurgency is under control and are encouraging the displaced to return to their homes and energy companies to resume their projects.</p> <p>"The terrorists are on the run permanently," Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi assured investors at the Mozambique Energy and Gas Summit in Maputo in September. He urged the gathering of international energy executives to resume work on their stalled liquefied natural gas projects.</p> <p>Mozambique's army and police forces, backed up by troops from Rwanda and support from a regional force from the Southern African Development Community, have succeeded in containing the extremist rebellion, officials say.</p> <p>"These places have now normalized and civilians are coming back," Rwandan Brig. Gen. Ronald Rwivanga, told the Rwandan newspaper The New Times this month, saying normal life is returning to the Palma district.</p>

Energy companies say they want to see displaced people return to the area. The \$60 billion liquefied natural gas projects led by the France-based TotalEnergies and ExxonMobil were suspended last year after insurgents briefly captured the adjacent town of Palma in March.

Speaking at the summit in Maputo, Stéphane Le Galles, the head of TotalEnergies' Mozambique gas project, said "the direction is very good" but the company still wants to see "a sustainable economic situation, not just in Palma but ... all over Cabo Delgado."

Despite the heavy presence of Mozambican and Rwandan soldiers, the extremists' attacks continue. Earlier this month the rebels spread their violence for the first time to neighboring Nampula province, where a Catholic mission was among the targets and an elderly Italian nun was among those killed.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees said it "considers security conditions to be too volatile in Cabo Delgado to facilitate or promote returns to the province," in a statement released earlier this month.

"People who have lost everything are returning to areas where services and humanitarian assistance are largely unavailable," said the UNHCR.

Those who return are met with a mixed situation. Economic life is beginning to return but basic infrastructure and public services are still lacking. Few schools are open and health services are sparse.

In the provincial capital, Pemba, where more than 100,000 displaced people have sought refuge, an elderly woman sat outside a hut where her family of 15 took up residence two years ago after fleeing an insurgent attack. They subsist on a meager diet of corn flour and plain rice. Unable to find work, they have no money for clothes or other essentials, she said.

"Definitely, we want to go back. This is not a home," said the grandmother, who spoke on condition of anonymity for her safety.

With their villages further north now destroyed, she says resuming normal life will be even more difficult.

Weighing up the risks and costs of returning, many have decided to stay put, despite the deprivations they face in the displacement camps.

"Over there, there is war and hunger," said another displaced person in the Nanjua camp. "We would not be going to a better place."

A mother cradling a small child while sitting on a grass mat said the threat of extremist violence remains a concern. She said many remain haunted by their experiences at the hands of the insurgents: "It's difficult to sleep in a place where you have seen a snake."

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HEADLINE	10/16 Govt. tactics block scrutiny of 'no fly' list?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/10/16/no-fly-list-lawsuits-blocked/
GIST	<p>Saadiq Long was only allowed to visit his mother after FBI agents questioned her. He was strip-searched at an airport in Amsterdam and arrested when visiting Turkey. He was banned from two Gulf states and fired from a trucking company.</p> <p>Nine years of such troubles, he came to believe, all arose from his placement on a list of suspected terrorists banned from air travel in the United States. Long, a veteran and Muslim convert, filed a lawsuit in federal court in Alexandria, Va. But as his lawsuit started moving forward in 2019, the government told him he had been removed from the list.</p>

Advocates say the reversal is part of a pattern from the government to evade scrutiny of the Terrorist Screening Database, a secret, FBI-maintained list of known or suspected terrorists subject to heightened security screening at borders, and of the smaller No Fly List of those barred from U.S. airspace.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been placed on the lists since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. For years, civil liberties groups have challenged the process of determining who is on the two lists as unconstitutional but say they're often hampered by the government's tactics.

"The Government removes people from their secret lists only when they fear that a court might impose restraint on their lawlessness," said Gadeir Abbas, an attorney with the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) litigating Long's case. "If the FBI has its way, delisting a person will become a kind of cheat code the federal government can use to deny people their day in court."

The group has eight such examples, he said. The latest involves Abdulkadir Nur, a Somali-born U.S. citizen who lives in Virginia and says in court filings he had been subjected to extensive, intrusive searches at U.S. airports since 2008. That year, Nur was part of a United Nations relief convoy in Somalia that local insurgents raided; he was questioned in the subsequent investigation but never accused of wrongdoing.

Nur got no confirmation that he was ever on the terrorism watch list or taken off it. His attorneys say they can infer both from the scrutiny he consistently received at airports until this month, when he did not get searched or interrogated for the first time in 12 years.

"The Government ... merely has stopped violating the law against Nur, and only to wrangle out of a lawsuit it cannot win," his attorneys wrote.

A spokeswoman for the Justice Department did not respond to a request for comment.

CAIR is arguing that Nur's lawsuit should continue despite the apparent concession. But earlier this year, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit ruled that Long's challenge to the No Fly List was moot because the government had taken him off. He can keep fighting his placement on the broader watch list.

Because of [a 2015 ruling](#) in another federal court, Long was able to learn that he was on the No Fly List. (Placement on the broader watch list remains a mystery.) He was told by the Department of Homeland Security that he was on the list because he had "participated in training that may make you a threat to U.S. national security," and that an arrest in Turkey in 2015 was also "of concern to the U.S. Government," according to court records.

Long says his only military training came from the U.S. government and that his arrest on a vacation in Turkey was a direct result of his placement on the No Fly List. Long served in the Air Force from 1987 to 1998. While stationed in Turkey, he converted to Islam and decided he could not be responsible for civilian deaths. Denied conscientious objector status, he ended up leaving the military with an "other than honorable discharge." He stayed in the Middle East and became an English teacher.

The DHS letter said the government "withheld certain information" about Long's placement because of "national security concerns."

But in late 2020, when the case was before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, he was [informed](#) he had been removed from the No Fly List and would not be put back on, absent new information; the Department of Justice made a similar guarantee in court.

Long's attorneys argued that his removal from the list shows "the Government is willing to place and maintain people on these lists even when they pose no national security threat."

A panel of Fourth Circuit judges said they could not agree.

“While the government doesn’t concede constitutional error, we assume it removed Long from the list because, as he contends, he doesn’t belong on it,” the court ruled in June. “To say otherwise would be to suggest the government risked national security simply to moot a lawsuit. This we decline to do.”

The Ninth Circuit ruled differently a month earlier, keeping alive a lawsuit from a man named Yonas Fikre, who alleges he spent years on the list for refusing to become an informant, even after he was removed.

“The government has not explained why it added him to the No Fly List in the first place and why, years later, it spontaneously took him off of it,” that court [wrote](#) in 2018. “Nothing prevents the government from putting him back on the list.”

The government subsequently issued a declaration similar to the one given to Long, saying Fikre would not go back on the list based on “currently available information.” But the Ninth Circuit [said that was not enough](#), because the government “has not ‘repudiated the decision’ to place Fikre on the list, nor has it identified any criteria for inclusion on the list that may have changed.” Without such disavowal, the court said in a unanimous decision this May, “Fikre remained stigmatized ‘as a known or suspected terrorist.’”

That was a “very powerful opinion,” said Jeffrey Kahn, a former Justice Department attorney who has studied the terrorism watch list as a law professor at Southern Methodist University. The goal of the government attorneys in these cases is “to end the case” before trial, he said, and just taking someone off the list “is an easy way to kill the lawsuit.” The government can track people in other ways and potentially put them back on the lists.

The same U.S. judge in the Eastern District of Virginia presiding over Nur’s case, Anthony J. Trenga, ruled in 2019 that the watch list system violates due process rights.

“The risk of erroneous deprivation of ... travel-related and reputational liberty interests is high,” the George W. Bush appointee [wrote](#) in response to a suit filed by 23 Muslim Americans.

He noted that for an agency to nominate a name for the list requires only “reasonable suspicion” that someone is a “suspected terrorist,” which does not require any evidence of involvement or interest in criminal activity. Ninety-nine percent of nominations are accepted by the Terrorist Screening Center.

According to court filings, as of 2019 there are roughly 1.1 million people on the broader watch list, of which 81,000 are barred from flying.

“If there were that many terrorists in the world, we would be getting attacked all day long,” said Javed Ali, former senior director for counterterrorism at the National Security Council. “That’s not the way to use a tool like this — if people are in there in error, they should not be there in perpetuity.”

He suggested a court [similar to the one that oversees secret surveillance orders](#) could evaluate Americans’ placement on these lists.

The Fourth Circuit overturned Trenga’s decision last year, saying “the delays and burdens experienced by plaintiffs at the border and in airports, although regrettable, do not mandate a complete overhaul.”

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	10/16 Oklahoma mystery 4 missing men deepens
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/16/us/okmulgee-oklahoma-missing-men.html
GIST	The police in a small Oklahoma city found four bodies in a river on Friday, three days after they said four men, all described as friends, had been reported missing.

The discovery of the bodies deepened the mystery surrounding the missing men in Okmulgee, a city of about 11,000 people about 40 miles south of Tulsa. The police said the bodies were males but were awaiting a medical examiner's confirmation of their identities.

The Okmulgee Police Department said a passer-by had noticed something suspicious in the Deep Fork River on Friday, leading investigators to find what appeared to be human remains protruding from the water.

Joe Prentice, the police chief, [said at a news conference on Friday](#) that he did not know whether the bodies were those of the four missing men, but that he had notified their families of the discovery.

"If it turns out that these four missing men are the remains in the river, then the focus of our investigation will shift from finding them to what happened to them," Chief Prentice said. "If it is determined that it is not them, then we'll have a separate investigation."

Chief Prentice said that investigators had previously not considered searching the area where the bodies were found.

"All the information that we had up to this point indicated that our missing men, based on telephone data, had gone east leaving town and then ultimately south on 75," he said, referring to Highway 75. "This is in the opposite direction."

The authorities earlier in the week [identified the missing men](#) as Mark Chastain, 32; Billy Chastain, 30; Mike Sparks, 32; and Alex Stevens, 29, all of Okmulgee.

The police said on Tuesday that all four were believed to have left Billy Chastain's home on Okmulgee's west side around 8 p.m. on Sunday on bicycles. Two of the men were likely carrying cellphones but calls to them went straight to voice mail, the police said.

The police said they had tried to locate the men using GPS.

In an [interview with the television station Fox 23](#), Chief Prentice said one of the men had an app on his phone that placed his last known location at a salvage yard. The chief said investigators had scoured 25 acres of that area on foot and with search dogs and came up with "nothing remarkable."

Residents reported sightings of some of the men around town, like at a smoke shop on the south side of town on Oct. 9 or at the Y.M.C.A. on Tuesday, the police said on Facebook. One person reported that all four men were seen walking along a street at 2 a.m. on Tuesday. The police emphasized that none of the sightings had been verified.

"We have had many, many, many reports of sightings," Chief Prentice said on Friday. "We haven't been able to confirm any of them. I had one today that was in Monroe, Louisiana" — about 400 miles away.

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HEADLINE	10/14 California mystery gas prices surcharge
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/10/14/california-mystery-gas-prices-surcharge/
GIST	Eight dollars for a gallon of gas. Once, it seemed like an impossibility; now, it seems to happen in California every time there is a price spike. Last week, a Chevron station in Los Angeles recorded prices of \$8.35 and above; similar prices were reported at multiple stations around Southern California. But some analysts say the most recent spike in California prices — the average price per gallon across the state as of Tuesday was \$6.29 — is only part of a much longer, and potentially more destructive, trend. For the past seven years, California consumers have suffered through what one economist calls a "mystery

gasoline surcharge.” That is, California [gas prices](#) are significantly higher than in the rest of the nation — and the price premium can’t be explained by state taxes and environmental regulations alone.

Severin Borenstein, a professor of business and public policy at the University of California at Berkeley, first noticed the separation between the state’s gas prices and the rest of the nation in 2015. An ExxonMobil oil refinery operating in Torrance, Calif., had just [exploded](#), and the interruption to gasoline refining explained the temporarily higher prices. But over the following months and years, Borenstein says, the difference never disappeared as he expected.

“It went up, and it never came down again,” he said.

California *does* have additional taxes and fees from environmental regulations that other states don’t have. The state’s low carbon fuels standard, for example, adds \$0.08 to every gallon of gas. California gas taxes add another \$0.17. But Borenstein’s data shows that, all told, California-specific taxes and regulations only account for around \$0.83. In September, however, the average Californian was paying \$1.57 more for gas than the average American, leaving a large “unexplained” surcharge. That’s a big gap — and in October, it could get even bigger.

So what’s behind the extra prices that Californians are paying? There are a few theories.

First, California uses its own special gas blend that lessens air pollution. (Other heavily populated metro areas around the country also have [special blends](#), but California’s is more restrictive.) California is also what some call a “petroleum island” — there are no pipelines bringing refined oil into the state. That means that for the most part, gas stations across the state have to get their gasoline from one of the five major refiners that provide 96 percent of California’s gasoline: Chevron, Marathon, PBF Energy, Phillips 66 and Valero.

Oil companies say this means that if there are any disruptions to the refining process or to the incoming supply of crude oil, prices can easily spike.

Borenstein says oil refiners’ power in the market could allow them to set higher prices. He points out that while the spot price of gasoline in California — the price at which refiners sell their oil on the open market — is only 10 to 15 cents higher than the national average, refiners can sell their oil to branded gasoline stations — which make up the large majority of stations in California — for higher prices. The California surcharge, he said, “is very likely related to the fact that there are a small number of very powerful branded refiners that can take advantage of their market share.”

Jamie Court, the president of the nonprofit Consumer Watchdog, goes further. “I don’t call it a ‘mystery surcharge’ — I know what’s happened to the market,” he said. “We’ve allowed consolidation.” Because branded stations are locked into contracts with the refiners, Court says, refiners can set high minimum prices that stations have to follow. He cites a [report](#) from his organization, drawn from SEC filings data, that argues that refiners have been making record profits over the past year or so.

But there could be other factors as well. Borenstein says the state should order an investigation into the surcharge to find out whether the contracts between refiners and retailers are actually the culprit; alternatively, he says, refiners could share their data if they want to prove environmental regulations are costing them more than estimated. “I posted my spreadsheet online and said, ‘Okay, show me yours,’ ” Borenstein said.

Kevin Slagle, the vice president of strategic communications for the Western States Petroleum Association, says the higher prices are caused by California’s specific fuel blend and regulatory requirements. Any disruptions to supply, he says, have knock-on effects for prices since refining capacity is so tight. “Let’s not forget that state policy in California is focused on eliminating refining and production in the state,” he said via email.

Even California Governor Gavin Newsom (D) has recently stepped into the debate, saying on Friday that he would call for a [special session](#) of the legislature in December to pass a “windfall tax” on refiner profits. “This degree of divergence from national prices has never happened before,” the governor [said](#) in a speech. “Their record profits are coming at your expense.”

Whatever the cause, Borenstein says some form of investigation would be worthwhile. Since 2015, he estimates, the mystery surcharge has cost California consumers [around \\$20 billion](#).

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HEADLINE	10/14 Mississippi River water levels critically low
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/14/mississippi-river-boats-barges-water-levels
GIST	<p>The water in the Mississippi River has dropped so low that barges are getting stuck, leading to expensive dredging and at least one recent traffic jam of more than 2,000 vessels backed up.</p> <p>The Mississippi River Basin produces nearly all – 92% – of US agricultural exports, and 78% of the global exports of feed grains and soybeans. The recent drought has dropped water levels to alarmingly low levels that are causing shipping delays, and seeing the costs of alternative transport, such as rail, rise.</p> <p>In Vicksburg, western Mississippi, residents have seen less than an inch of rain since the start of September.</p> <p>The mayor, George Flaggs, told WAPT-TV that the river was lower than he had seen it in nearly 70 years.</p> <p>“It’s definitely having an impact on the local economy because the commercial use of this river has almost stopped,” Flaggs said.</p> <p>Last Friday, the US Coast Guard said that there was a backup of more than 2,000 barges at various points, Bloomberg reported. The halted barges were carrying recently harvested corn and soybeans.</p> <p>“When the water gets low enough, commerce starts to slow – commerce is restricted, and it turns into an extremely difficult environment to operate,” Austin Golding, president of Golding Barge Line, told WAPT-TV.</p> <p>“This will actually affect us in a very negative way. We have to have less cargo on our barges and less tonnage moving. It affects our revenues.”</p> <p>Hesaid shippers had been forced to limit the amount of cargo – including grain, oil and rocks – that their barges can carry in order to safely move across the low water levels.</p> <p>“We need the barges fully loaded and our tows pushing as many barges as possible to be as economically viable as possible,” said Golding.</p> <p>Barges have long been considered a sustainable and cost-effective alternative for shippers. A single hopper barge can haul as much dry cargo as 16 rail cars or 70 trucks, according to the Upper Mississippi Waterway Association: a 15-barge tow keeps 1,050 trucks off the highway.</p> <p>Moreover, a barge can move one ton of freight 29% further than a rail car, and four times further than a truck. Rail generates 39% more carbon dioxide than barge travel for the same amount of cargo; for trucks the figure is 371%.</p> <p>The US army corps of engineers is currently working on deepening the Mississippi River from Baton Rouge, Louisiana to the Gulf of Mexico.</p> <p>“We’ve reached it from New Orleans to the Gulf,” said Ricky Boyett, USACE New Orleans public affairs chief. “We still have to dredge Baton Rouge and New Orleans – that’s our focal area now.”</p>

HEADLINE	10/14 Climate protests are getting weirder
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/10/14/tomato-soup-sunflowers-climate-protest/
GIST	<p>Just after 11 a.m. on Friday morning, two young climate protesters entered a room in the National Gallery in London containing one of Vincent van Gogh's most famous paintings: "Sunflowers." They opened two cans of Heinz tomato soup, flung them on the painting, then glued their hands to the wall.</p> <p>"What is worth more, art or life?" one of the protesters shouted, her hand glued to the wall behind her. "... Are you more concerned about the protection of a painting or the protection of our planet?" The activist group Just Stop Oil, which aims to stop U.K. oil and gas projects, said the protesters were members.</p> <p>It was a bizarre moment — but it was also only the latest in a series of climate protests that have targeted museums and art galleries around the world. In July, protesters glued themselves to John Constable's "The Hay Wain," also in London's National Gallery, after pasting their own "apocalyptic" vision of the future over the painting's surface. That same month, members of an Italian climate group known as Ultima Generazione glued themselves to a painting by Sandro Botticelli at the Uffizi museum in Florence. Similar actions have also taken place in Australia.</p> <p>"Sunflowers," like the other paintings targeted by activists so far, is fine. The shock of seeing tomato soup hit the painting — which probably helped propel the video of the protest to viral status — is tempered by the fact that, like most museum paintings, "Sunflowers" was protected by glass. "There is some minor damage to the frame, but the painting is unharmed," the National Gallery said in a statement. As of late afternoon U.K. time on Friday, the painting had been put back on display.</p> <p>But the climate art stunt was still a strange form of protest, one that seemed more likely to alienate people. Online, many people reacted in disgust and anger; some joked that the protesters were targeting "Sunflowers" merely because it was an "oil painting."</p> <p>But it aligns with a growing number of climate protests in recent years that have disrupted normal life in increasingly unexpected ways.</p> <p>Several years ago, activists from the climate group Extinction Rebellion climbed on the roof of a commuter train in London, preventing people from getting to work and causing a scuffle between commuters and protesters. Last week, climate protesters blocked freeways in the D.C. area to push President Biden to declare a "climate emergency." Another group, known as the Tyre Extinguishers, has been letting the air out of SUV tires across the United Kingdom and in New York, arguing that the vehicles use more gas and are harmful to pedestrians and cyclists.</p> <p>Dana Fisher, a professor of sociology at the University of Maryland who studies protest movements, says that such developments are a form of "tactical innovation," in which protesters try new strategies to get increased media attention. The media gets accustomed to particular types of activism; a march or a sit-in that once commanded attention soon gets written off as old news. Climate protesters, Fisher explained, started by gluing themselves to artworks, which initially made a small news splash. Now that attention for that has cooled down, they have moved on to at least the <i>appearance</i> of defacing artworks, in an attempt to attract more eyes.</p> <p>The action in the National Gallery did make prominent headlines across U.K. newspapers and around Europe; by late afternoon, one video of the incident on YouTube had been viewed 13.3 million times. At least to the activists involved, the fact that the protest had gone viral was probably viewed as a success. The climate issue — which at times is buried by geopolitical, economic and celebrity news — was back in headlines once again.</p> <p>But as tactics escalate, protesters risk turning off people who may otherwise be sympathetic to their cause. "Research shows that this kind of tactic doesn't work to change minds and hearts," Fisher said. Someone</p>

	prevented from commuting to work — or someone who believes that irreplaceable artworks are being harmed — might be turned off by the climate movement for some time, if not permanently.
	“It’s working to get attention,” Fisher said. “But to what end?”
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HEADLINE	10/14 Troubling drought conditions: 80% of US
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/10/14/drought-conditions-record-westernus-climate/
GIST	<p>The most recent update to the U.S. Drought Monitor revealed a startling figure: Nearly 82 percent of the country is facing at least abnormally dry conditions — the highest percentage since the drought monitor launched in 2000.</p> <p>Severe to exceptional drought conditions remain common in the West, which has been battling its driest period in the past 1,200 years. But the drought is now far more widespread, with unusual dryness continuing in parts of the Northeast and expanding extreme drought conditions in the Midwest.</p> <p>Here is a look at drought conditions across the United States, from low-end droughts all the way to rare “exceptional” drought conditions.</p> <p>The West</p> <p>The West — defined by the U.S. Drought Monitor as the states of Montana, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Nevada and California — is again seeing widespread drought conditions, though there have been slight improvements since a year ago, when all but 2.57 percent of the region was under unusual dry conditions. Today, that figure sits at 5.23 percent.</p> <p>California is ground zero of the drought in the West. The entire state is experiencing at least moderate drought conditions. Almost the entire state might be facing severe drought conditions if not for the much-needed rain brought to parts of far-Southern California by Hurricane Kay in the first half of September.</p> <p>A little over 40 percent of the state is seeing extreme drought conditions — stretching from the Los Angeles area to the Central Valley all the way up into the Shasta Cascades and southern Oregon. The last three water years — which run from Oct. 1 to Sept. 30 — have been the driest in California’s history.</p> <p>Several other Western states — Arizona, Nevada, Washington, Idaho, and Utah — are entirely in drought. In Utah, more than 51 percent of the state is seeing extreme drought conditions, dropping water levels in the Great Salt Lake to record lows for the second year in a row, according to local reporting.</p> <p>Drought relief in the West is not likely any time soon, though some rainfall is expected in parts of Southern California, Arizona and New Mexico over the weekend. In general, though, the U.S. Monthly Drought Outlook, released by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, expects drought conditions to persist unabated.</p> <p>High Plains</p> <p>Less than 10 percent of the High Plains — defined as Colorado, Wyoming, North and South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas — is drought-free, with the worst of the drought impacting the latter two states.</p> <p>In Nebraska, no part of the state is drought-free and over 98 percent of the state is seeing at least moderate drought conditions. Over the past three months, the percentage of the state under severe drought has nearly doubled, while areas of exceptional drought — the worst level on the drought monitor’s scale — have expanded to 11.49 percent.</p> <p>Firefighters and farmers in Nebraska have been battling wildfires, including the Bovee Fire, which has burned more than 18,900 acres — torching a campground and killing at least one person, according to reporting from NPR.</p>

In Kansas, 27 percent of the state is under exceptional drought, up from just 1 percent three months earlier. The worst of the drought is concentrated in the state's south, including in Wichita. In the past 90 days, nearly all of Kansas has seen significantly below-normal rainfall.

Current forecasts suggest little-to-no rain (or snow) is expected in the High Plains over the next week or so.

The South

The South — which the U.S. Drought Monitor defines as Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee — has seen drought conditions significantly worsen over the past year. One year ago, less than half of the region was under a drought. Now, just under 6 percent of the region is drought-free.

By far the worst of the drought is in Oklahoma, where nearly 100 percent of the state is under a severe drought. Just over 85 percent of the state is seeing severe drought, while nearly 30 percent is experiencing exceptional drought. On Tuesday, Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt (R) issued an executive order intended to help farmers sustain their businesses.

“As our farmers and ranchers continue navigating unprecedented challenges brought on by this year's extreme drought, it is our responsibility as leaders to offer assistance and support wherever we can,” Stitt said in a [press release](#). “Today's action builds on my administration's drought relief efforts and will allow for more commercial hay loads to come into Oklahoma to meet the demand of Oklahoma producers.”

Most of Texas is still facing drought conditions, though they have eased in severity over the past three months, aided by [flooding rainfall](#) in August. Elsewhere in the South, all of Arkansas is seeing drought conditions, closing boat ramps at the Lee Creek Reservoir, which has dipped to 78 percent capacity, according to [local reporting](#).

In Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee, drought conditions are widespread but not severe. Some rainfall is likely in Texas and parts of Oklahoma late Saturday into Sunday, with wet conditions pushing into Arkansas as well. While helpful, the rain is unlikely to end the drought.

Hawaii

While most people wouldn't associate Hawaii with drought, nearly 90 percent of the state is abnormally dry, and the [U.S. Monthly Drought Outlook](#) expects drought conditions to persist and worsen this month. Such conditions are set to continue “across [the] Hawaii Islands given a strong dry signal driven by ongoing La Niña conditions,” according to the outlook.

Drought conditions have worsened since the start of the year, when just 17 percent of the state was seeing any sort of drought. Over the past three months alone, the percentage of the state seeing severe drought has climbed from 16 percent to 40 percent.

Elsewhere

In the rest of the United States, there are pockets of drought, but nothing as regionally widespread. In the Southeast, nearly all of Alabama, Georgia and parts of the Florida Panhandle are seeing abnormal dryness, with pockets of moderate to severe drought.

Drought conditions have expanded rather quickly in the region. The percentage of Georgia seeing abnormal dryness shot up from nearly 50 percent this week, with Alabama seeing a change from 64 percent to 98 percent in the same time frame. Little rainfall is expected in these areas over the next week, meaning drought conditions will likely worsen.

Another pocket of drought is in the Northeast, where extreme drought around Boston, an area that has been [unusually dry for much of the summer](#). Still, the drought has significantly eased since August, when extreme drought overtook more than 24.5 percent of Massachusetts; that figure is down to just 3.5 percent.

	<p>In the Midwest, drought conditions are fairly widespread, though generally sub-severe. An exception is Missouri, where more than 37 percent of the state is seeing severe drought conditions, with pockets of extreme drought in the state's southwest corner near Joplin. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources is encouraging the public to submit reports detailing drought conditions in their area.</p> <p>Drought conditions have overtaken all of Iowa, as well as much of Minnesota. Both states have pockets of extreme and severe drought.</p> <p>In these states, as well as in parts of the High Plains and South, worsening drought has lowered the flow of the Mississippi River to its lowest level in at least a decade, slowing barge traffic. Little drought relief is expected in the coming weeks anywhere in the Mississippi River basin.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/14 Oregon reservoir emptied 3rd year in a row
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/oregon-reservoir-emptied-for-unprecedented-3rd-year-in-a-row/
GIST	<p>BEND, Ore. (AP) — A water reservoir considered to be a key bellwether for the amount of water available for farmers in Central Oregon is nearly empty again at the end of the irrigation season.</p> <p>The Bulletin reports Wickiup Reservoir was just 3% full as of Tuesday, according to the Bureau of Reclamation website.</p> <p>Some water is being retained to avoid a turbidity problem that happened two years ago when the Deschutes River turned an unusual shade of green in Bend.</p> <p>Wickiup Reservoir holds irrigation water in winter for North Unit Irrigation District farmers to use in the spring and summer. But drought has drained the reservoir to the bottom in the last three years and in four of the last five years.</p> <p>Bridget Moran, Bend field office supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said her agency is working with Habitat Conservation Plan permit holders and federal partners to “adaptively manage” the limited water supplies.</p> <p>Jeremy Giffin, the Deschutes Basin watermaster, said the amount of water available in 2023 for irrigation is likely to be an amount similar to what the reservoir held last April.</p> <p>“However, I am hopeful we have an above-average snowpack this upcoming winter, which could help lift those levels a bit higher,” Giffin said.</p> <p>At the end of March, four area reservoirs were at record low levels for the start of irrigation season. Wickiup was 55% full, a level that forced the North Unit Irrigation District to cut the allotment of water to its lowest allocation farmers have had in that area.</p> <p>In the Upper Deschutes Basin, snowpack was just 54% of normal at the end of March, according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service. A late-season snowfall helped to make up some ground.</p> <p>Central Oregon’s drought has been described as the worst on record, going back 127 years.</p> <p>Larry O’Neill, an associate professor at the Oregon State University College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences, said seasonal forecast models suggest above-average precipitation in Central Oregon for December to February and near-normal temperatures.</p> <p>“The projection for more precipitation than normal this winter from the seasonal forecast models is of low to medium confidence,” O’Neill said.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/14 WA man records 180,000 UFO sightings
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/pacific-nw-magazine/as-one-eastern-wa-man-records-ufo-sightings-others-debunk-them/
GIST	<p>HARRINGTON, Lincoln County — Come with me on a trip into UFO land, with the believers, the skeptics — and a guy like me.</p> <p>I have never seen a UFO, but I write feature stories, and when you write feature stories, you inevitably veer off into the unconventional.</p> <p>In many ways, a modest manufactured home here in Harrington is Ground Zero for UFO enthusiasts. This is where tens of thousands of sighting reports are carefully cataloged into a computer.</p> <p>This town of 430, an hour's drive west of Spokane, surrounded by rolling acres of wheat fields, is the home of Peter Davenport, 74.</p> <p>Seven days a week, in a one-man operation (except for a webmaster), he runs the National UFO Reporting Center. This is his 28th year.</p> <p>“Giving up? Every day I think that,” he says.</p> <p>He estimates he's meticulously logged 180,000 reports since he took over the site in 1994 from the late Bob Gribble, a Seattle firefighter with a fascination for UFOs. And they just keep coming.</p> <p>Then Davenport explains why he keeps going. “This is probably the most important scientific question ever to confront mankind. Are we alone in this galaxy, or are we not? In my opinion, we are not alone. We are visited on a routine basis by these things we call UFOs.”</p> <p>THE REPORTS HAVE that look of just-the-facts: date, place, what was observed (although what was observed is sometimes very strange).</p> <p>Davenport's site is referenced in stories that have run in The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal. It is his site that the Federal Aviation Administration recommends for reporting UFOs.</p> <p>He has never married, has no children, so his time is all his own.</p> <p>For June 2022, for example, he logged 267 reports, most from the United States, and a few international ones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I saw a darkish gray disk going in and out of the clouds.” • “My wife and I saw a rectangular-shaped object that was lit up in the night sky.” • “A large shadow moved over the house. It literally darkened the inside as well, passed across, and the power went out for a few seconds.” <p>Year in and year out, the reports are similar.</p> <p>FOR DAVENPORT, a fascination with UFOs began when he was 6, growing up in St. Louis, when the family went to a drive-in movie.</p> <p>“It was July or August of 1954. Suddenly there was a disturbance, and people running and shouting. I looked out the right side of our Studebaker and saw the most incredible thing I have ever seen in my life. It was so bright that it looked like the sun, shaped like one of those English rugby balls. It rose straight up and dropped down behind the movie screen. Then it was gone into the northern sky. I suspect that event goes a long way to explain why I'm sitting in this house in Harrington, talking to you about UFOs,” says Davenport.</p>

It's fitting that his UFO center is headquartered in this state. It's not surprising.

In July, a report proclaimed Washington the [No. 1 state](#) in the country for UFO sightings, according to a compilation done by the online jigsaw puzzle site [im-a-puzzle.com](#). It was based on two years of UFO reports from Davenport's site, ending in December 2021. Washington reported 88.03 sightings per 100,000 residents, about twice the national average of 44.95.

The Pacific Northwest has a long history with UFOs.

The term "flying saucers" was born here 75 years ago.

On June 24, 1947, Kenneth Arnold, a businessman and an experienced pilot flying a single-engine plane, reported [seeing nine flying shiny objects](#) weaving and banking at astounding speeds by Mount Rainier.

NATIONWIDE, IN THE LAST couple of years — after being relegated to stories The Associated Press labels "Oddities" — UFOs are being taken seriously.

"UFO spotting has replaced bird watching as pandemic obsession," headlined a Sept. 1, 2020, [Wall Street Journal story](#). An [August 2021 Gallup Poll](#) said 4 in 10 Americans believe UFOs are "alien spacecraft visiting Earth from other planets or galaxies."

A 2021 [National Intelligence report](#) to the Senate said the feds were unable to explain more than 140 UFOs, although no evidence was found of alien life.

During a [May 17 House hearing](#) with Pentagon officials, one testified about an "unidentified aerial phenomena," or UAP. Reported a jet fighter pilot, "I do not have an explanation for what this specific object is." [NASA announced](#) in June it was forming a team to examine UAPs.

DAVENPORT SPEAKS WITH the background of someone with a lot of academic credentials.

He has bachelor's degrees in biology and Russian from Stanford University, and master's degrees in fisheries and business administration from the University of Washington. He was one of the founders of a Seattle biotech company and sold his stock in 1995. The money was "helpful" in running his low-budget site, he says, which he estimates costs \$250 to \$500 a month.

It grates him that in all those hours answering the phone, he has to deal with joke calls.

"On a typical day, between 10% to 80% of calls placed to our hotline are crank calls," says Davenport. "It started in a serious sense in 2017, when a young girl in Portland built a website of 10 scary telephone numbers to call. That's given rise to between 30,000 to 40,000 crank calls in the last five years."

On his phone's caller ID, he recognizes a frequent such caller. He lets it go to voicemail.

"It's filth, like they're all coached with the same line," says Davenport. "'A UFO landed in the backyard last night. It looked like a ... [and here he uses a term for a sex toy.]' "

At his age, he knows someone will have to take over the site.

His webmaster, Christian Stepien, 62, of Santa Barbara, the retired founder of the software company Experlogix, says he's willing to spend the hours. Also a UFOlogist, he says, "I have the bandwidth for it."

I DID TELL YOU at the beginning that a trip into UFO land is unconventional.

Davenport used to live in Seattle. In 2006, he ended up in Harrington because it's near a decommissioned Cold War-era nuclear missile silo. He bought it for \$100,000 because he always had wanted to own one.

He stores a few UFO paper files in cabinets there, but mostly it's a cavernous, empty, dank place.

Sometimes he takes visitors on a tour. The silo is a local legend (you can read about it in [The Backstory](#) on Page 2 of today's magazine).

Looking at Davenport's website, you easily can understand why UFO skeptics are skeptics. There are no smartphone high-resolution images of a UFO that landed in the middle of a city park.

The images are of shapes, lights, streaks or drawings; the latter obviously done by individuals with minimal drawing experience.

What you do find are reports from individuals who say they saw something, and it was strange.

Here is one from Dec. 29, 1994, near LaCrosse in Whitman County. I picked that one because on Davenport's website, with its rudimentary drawing, it is featured in the image gallery.

"Mother and six children were driving northwest on Zaring Cutoff Road when the children spotted bright lights to the right side. They were three seemingly identical black, delta-shaped ships with a very bright yellow or white 'headlight' on the front, which was scanning the ground ahead of and below them as they flew across the road at an estimated speed of 5 mph. After the objects had crossed the road, passing directly over the car, they turned south and continued moving in that direction."

Davenport says that as he talked to the mother on the phone, he could hear her children in the background "blurting out corrections." "It was a wonderful form of confirmation," wrote Davenport.

ONE UFO SKEPTIC is Adam Frank, an astrophysicist at the University of Rochester in New York. There are numerous UFO skeptics.

I contacted Frank because in 1992, he earned a Ph.D. in physics at the University of Washington and co-authored with UW emeritus astronomy Prof. Woodruff T. Sullivan a [May 2016 paper](#) in the journal [Astrobiology](#) on their calculations based on the discovery of more than 3,000 "exoplanets," planets outside the solar system.

Based on factors needed for alien life to exist in an exoplanet — such as orbits in the right "Goldilocks" location that are not too hot and not too cold for liquid water to exist — they concluded that there have been extraterrestrial civilizations. Whether such civilizations currently exist they couldn't answer.

That led Frank to write a May 30, 2021, [New York Times Op-Ed](#). It was headlined, "I'm a physicist who searches for aliens. UFOs don't impress me."

To him, "phenomena observed using well characterized scientific instruments far away in a galaxy" are considerably different from reported "sensational findings just a few miles away in our own atmosphere."

In a telephone interview, Frank says, "Think how much better camera technology has become since Kenneth Arnold. How come pictures of UFOs are so blurry?"

Frank says about reports such as the LaCrosse one, "In general, it's personal testimony, and you can't do a whole lot with personal testimony. That's not what science is about. Science requires measuring with equipment."

Davenport is used to the skeptics.

Of the blurry UFO images, he says, "Traditionally, most people don't know how to use their camera. The night focus mechanism on most cameras doesn't function very well when all you have is an indistinct source of light."

About Frank, he says, “Has he looked at my data? Has he ever attended one of my presentations?”

Frank replies, “I have looked at UFO images and data. People send me stuff all the time. From a scientific perspective, there isn’t much you can do with it.”

Davenport is asked why no UFO ever has landed at a city park, to be witnessed and photographed at length.

“You have to talk to the aliens to get an answer,” he says.

Well, what can you say about that?

The soccer fields at Lower Woodland Park would make a grand landing site.

Three often-cited UFO sightings

1. Navy pilots and UFOs

NAVY PILOTS ARE the guys portrayed by Tom Cruise in the “Top Gun” movies. You would trust their observations in the air, wouldn’t you?

A number of videos of Navy pilots encountering baffling phenomena are on the internet.

A notable one is from 2015, taken aboard a U.S. Navy F/A-18 Super Hornet from the nuclear aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt, near the Florida coast.

It was among [three Navy UFO](#) videos [confirmed](#) by the Department of Defense as real; it labels them unidentified aerial phenomena.

The audio begins with the pilot at first saying he’s seeing a drone. But then: “It is a (expletive) drone, bro. There’s a whole fleet of them! ... My gosh, they’re all going against the wind. The wind is 120 knots to the west ... Look at that thing! ... It’s rotating!”

UFO skeptic Mick West, who runs the website [Metabunk.org](#), did his own research. He gave a detailed explanation, saying the UFOs were nothing but glare from the Navy jet’s gimbal system, a tool that uses motors and intelligent sensors to support and stabilize a camera.

2. 75 years ago, flying saucers started with Kenneth Arnold

HE WAS AN experienced pilot with more than 4,000 hours of high-altitude pilot time.

Kenneth Arnold lived in Meridian, Idaho, and sold fire-extinguishing equipment. He piloted his single-engine Call-Air A-2 around the Northwest to visit clients.

In the 1952 book he wrote, “Coming of the Saucers,” and in various interviews, [including with me](#) way back in 1977, he repeated the same story about what he saw flying by Mount Rainier.

It was 3 p.m., he told me, “When a very bright flash lit up the plane and the sky around me.” At first he thought it was the sun.

“But the flash happened again, and that’s when I saw where it was coming from. It came spasmodically from a chain of nine circular-shaped aircraft way up from the vicinity of Mount Rainier ... I could not find any tails on these things. They didn’t leave a jet trail behind them. I judged their size to be at least 100 feet in diameter.”

Using the clock on his instrument panel, he judged the flying objects were traveling at 1,760 miles per hour.

The story was picked up by The Associated Press. Subsequent headlines used “flying saucers,” and the term was born.

The Air Force concluded it was a mirage.

Back when I interviewed him, Arnold, who died in 1984 at age 68, said, “I made my report because I thought it was my duty. It was the only proper and American thing to do. I saw what I saw.”

3. Oregon farmer Evelyn Trent’s historic flying saucer photos

ON MAY 11, 1950, at around 7:30 p.m., Evelyn Trent was feeding the chickens and rabbits outside the family farmhouse just outside McMinnville, Oregon, about 40 miles southeast of Portland.

She saw an object that looked “like a good-sized parachute canopy without the strings, only silvery-bright mixed with bronze,” she told The Oregonian in a 1950 story. It made no sound and was “sort of gliding,” she said.

She ran to tell her husband, Paul Trent, to take pictures. He managed to take two photos with his Kodak Roamer folding camera.

The photos ended up in a full-page story in [LIFE magazine](#), which, in that era, was one of the most influential mass communication mediums.

Skeptics have several explanations. It was something hanging from a power line. It was a detached side mirror from a vehicle.

A 950-page report commissioned by the Air Force and led by nuclear physicist Edward U. Condon studied a number of UFO sightings. The 1968 study included the Trent photos and concluded the images were real and that the couple was truthful, even if Evelyn Trent had told The Oregonian in 1950 that she had seen flying saucers at the coast [three separate times](#).

What is undisputed is that the McMinnville photos remain one of the most prominent images ever taken of a UFO.

In May, the town of McMinnville hosted the [22nd annual UFO Festival](#) to commemorate the Trent images and bring in tourists; 20,000 attended.

That’s not a UFO. It’s something easily explained.

1. Starlink satellites

On Aug. 20, the National Weather Service’s Seattle office [tweeted images](#) of lights in the sky that at least some people mistook for UFOs.

They were actually a Starlink-55 “train,” a massive satellite system that Elon Musk’s SpaceX has launched to provide high-speed internet service to even the most remote areas on Earth.

The company launches the satellites in batches, hence the appearance of a train of lights. This was the 55th Starlink mission, of 53 satellites.

To the Weather Service tweet, one person replied, “Oh my GOSH! My buddy and I were climbing Rainier on Aug 15 early morning ... about 12,500 ft at 1:30 a.m. and breathing hard and looked up and saw this. We couldn’t find any news about it and just about swore we saw aliens!!”

2. Venus

“The biggest culprit of all,” writes [Ian Ridpath](#), a British astronomy writer, editor of the Oxford Dictionary of Astronomy and a UFO skeptic.

He writes, “Venus is the brightest object in the night sky after the Moon and can dazzle the eye, sometimes appearing cross-shaped.”

He says there are a number of videos taken with handheld camcorders that appear to show saucer-shaped objects making erratic motions. The motions are noticeable only when the camera is zoomed in, “due simply to tremors in the hands of the excited camera operator.”

3. Fireballs

Says the astronomy site EarthSky.org, “A meteor — or a piece of debris from space — might leave a strange-looking trail ... “ They can be so bright, they can briefly light up the night sky.

4. Lenticular clouds

They are [mistaken for UFOs](#) because of their saucer shape. Lenticular clouds form when stable, moist air flows over a mountain, creating a series of oscillating waves. They’re a common sight around Mount Rainier.

5. Sky lanterns

These are small [hot air balloons](#) made of translucent paper, launched at festivals and other occasions. They used to be commonly called Chinese lanterns, as they go back to the Han Dynasty.

6. Contrails

Contrails often are confused with “slow-moving meteors,” “unannounced comets” or other sorts of strange UFOs, according to EarthSky.org. They look impressive, but they are vapor or condensation trails produced by high-altitude aircraft.

7. Rocket junk

[A March 26, 2021, story in The Seattle Times](#) told of falling SpaceX rocket junk putting on a “a fast-moving shower of glowing points of fire.”

For about 40 seconds, a cloud of fiery objects streaked across the heavens, trailing parallel tails of fire. Genevieve Reaume, a Portland TV reporter, was outside her home.

“We were awe-struck. Completely swept up and overwhelmed with what we were seeing,” she said. Reaume said she didn’t consider it an alien invasion. “But it was something that was not man-made, was my initial guess ... some sort of rare astrological event.”

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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	10/16 UK teens dumping milk in grocery stores
SOURCE	https://www.fox5ny.com/news/teens-dumping-milk-grocery-stores
GIST	<p>The latest environmentalist trend is here: pouring out milk in grocery stores.</p> <p>All across the United Kingdom, teenagers concerned about the environment are doing "milk pours." The new trend involves going into grocery stores, picking up cartons of cow-produced milk, and pouring out their contents, according to the animal rights group Animal Rebellion.</p> <p>Videos that have popped up on social media show teens pouring milk onto the floor, over sales counters, and elsewhere in the store.</p> <p>"The dairy industry is incredibly environmentally destructive. The world’s top 5 meat and dairy corporations are now responsible for more GHG emissions than Exxon, Shell or BP," the organization said in a tweet Saturday.</p>

“We NEED a plant based future now,” it added.

The account also shared a report from Grain, an international non-profit organization, and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP), which calls for the planet to "dramatically reduce its greenhouse gas emissions" by eliminating meat and dairy consumption.

According to Animal Rebellion, the "milk pours" took place at eight different locations Saturday, including London, Manchester, Norwich, and Edinburgh.

"Animal farming is THE leading cause of the loss of our wildlife and natural ecosystems," the group said in another tweet, which also called for the government to "support farmers in an urgent transition to a plant based food system and allow the freed up land to be rewilded in order to restore wildlife populations."

Several countries around the world have imposed regulations on the agriculture industry, such as limits on nitrogen emissions caused by dairy production. Environmentalists have encouraged the use of dairy alternatives, such as almond, soy, coconut and oat milk, though these too have been criticized.

The Biden administration has indicated that it intends to push changes on the US farming industry to tackle climate change.

In 2020, the EPA estimated that 11% of the U.S.'s total greenhouse gas emissions came from the agriculture sector, compared to 27% from transportation, 25% from energy, and 24% from industry.

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HEADLINE	10/17 Spain, Europol bust ‘narco bank’
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/spanish-police-bust-regions/
GIST	<p>Spanish police have taken down an organized crime gang believed to have laundered hundreds of millions of dollars annually, according to Europol.</p> <p>The European policing organization claimed that it worked alongside the Spanish National Police (Policía Nacional) and Tax Agency (Agencia Tributaria), as well as judicial cooperation agency Eurojust, to corner the gang.</p> <p>The underground “narco bank” in question is said to have been run mainly by Syrian nationals and has helped to launder an estimated €300m (\$292m) per year for drug traffickers and other criminal organizations since 2020.</p> <p>The big bust came on September 27, when over 200 officers raided 21 locations in the Spanish provinces of Málaga and Toledo, arresting 32 individuals and seizing nearly €3m in criminal assets. These included €428,000 in cash, €1.5m in various cryptocurrency accounts, 11 luxury vehicles and many kilos of marijuana.</p> <p>Europol claimed €2.9m in cash had already been seized during the course of the investigation.</p> <p>The enterprise was apparently based in a restaurant in the city of Fuenlabrada, close to Madrid, and used the underground hawala network to transfer funds illegally while evading the scrutiny of law enforcement.</p> <p>Trillions of dollars are thought to be laundered annually around the world, supporting criminal activities as varied as human trafficking, romance fraud and racketeering.</p> <p>While most of this activity remains undetected, police score the occasional win. In June, Europol revealed details of a major anti-money laundering operation that bust a €44m criminal network.</p> <p>The price criminals pay for committing such acts is also increasing: two foreign nationals were handed a combined 33 years of jail time at the UK’s Kingston Crown Court earlier this year following their conviction for money laundering.</p>

HEADLINE	10/17 Crystal meth pours into Iraq
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/17/iraq-meth-iraq-drugs/
GIST	<p>BASRA, Iraq — Inside the dilapidated headquarters of Basra’s drug unit, the colonel’s stack of case files rarely shrinks. Yet every night below the flickering fluorescent lights, chatter thrums before a new round of raids.</p> <p>The officers sound exhausted.</p> <p>Iraq is in the throes of an addiction epidemic as parts of a generation impoverished by war and neglect is turning to the drugs that are now flooding the country. Basra’s understaffed and underfunded counternarcotics squad is overwhelmed.</p> <p>At the center of this blight is the cloying heat and crushing poverty of Basra, where jail cells are full and dealers have police on their payroll so kingpins remain untouched. But the origins are far away, in the cool mountains of Afghanistan and the underground laboratories of Iran where new supplies and techniques have led to a flourishing trade.</p> <p>“We have a disaster here,” said Col. Ehab, a career intelligence officer who was directing the house raids on a recent night. He spoke on the condition that only his first name be used over concerns for his security.</p> <p>Since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion opened Iraq’s border with Iran, there has been a constant flow of people, religious pilgrims, trade — and smuggling, including of drugs. But it was around 2017 that a new menace appeared: crystal meth.</p> <p>A domestic crackdown on Iran’s own growing drug problem was making the basic ingredients difficult to come by when producers in Afghanistan unlocked the secret to extracting a key component of methamphetamine, ephedrine, from the local ephedra plant.</p> <p>Today, the fruits of that discovery are found throughout the region.</p> <p>On the night that Washington Post reporters accompanied Basra’s drug squad on its raids, there were almost 700 people crammed into the unit’s three holding cells, built for 200 in total.</p> <p>As Ehab and his drug squad snaked toward the shanty districts on Basra’s northeastern edge, they worried that their nightly arrests were only magnifying the problem, as dealers used their time on the inside to recruit more people.</p> <p>New supplies, old routes</p> <p>Seizures of crystal meth from Afghanistan and Iran have increased dramatically across the Middle East in recent years, according to regional officials and experts, as it has followed the well worn path of the older opium and heroin trade.</p> <p>In Turkey, security forces seized more than 5½ tons of methamphetamine last year with raids along the Iranian border and in Istanbul. In just the first seven months of 2022, the number jumped to 8.6 tons.</p> <p>Turkish authorities report that the smuggling network involves Iranian nationals with links to domestic organized crime networks, and parts of the supply are intended for onward shipment to the European Union, Southeast Asia and Australia.</p> <p>Jordan anti-narcotics department, meanwhile, reported seizures of methamphetamines soared to more than 45 tons in the first nine months of 2022 — more than 20 times more than the same period last year.</p> <p>“[The year] 2017 was a game changer,” said David Mansfield, an expert on Afghanistan’s illicit economy whose work draws from fieldwork and aerial imagery. Local producers shifted from using over-the-</p>

counter medicines — used in the rest of the world to make ephedrine — to the widely available ephedra, growing wild on Afghan hillsides.

“Suddenly you’ve got this new player on the block that is producing methamphetamine at half the price,” Mansfield said.

With a booming market for the drug already existing in Iran, the producers decided to start using the cheaper materials imported from Afghanistan, said Alexander Soderholm, an analyst at the European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction.

“So the logic is effectively: why don’t we outsource all this to let us focus on the distribution side of things and also possibly production for external markets,” he said.

The sudden surge in crystal meth supplies was soon spilling into Iraq where decades of conflict, [corruption and dysfunctional governance](#) have left the country in crisis.

Reports of drug seizures top news broadcasts almost daily. While the reported annual seizures of hundreds of kilograms are likely a deep undercount, even these numbers are doubling every year.

The trade is protected by powerful armed groups, some of them linked to Iran, as well as tribal networks and corrupt officials, according to Iraqi security, border and judicial officials.

“We’ve had officers arrested for this. They covered for criminals and they were on the dealers’ monthly payrolls,” said Ammar Shaker Fajr, a judge in Basra’s Third Investigative Court.

In February, gunmen [killed a senior judge](#) in next-door Maysan province. In September, a general from the region’s anti-drug squad was [shot dead outside a restaurant](#).

Basra’s drug squad is receiving a growing tide of threats, too. “There are days I just think about quitting,” Ehab said. “I already feel like a dead man.”

Seeking escape

The flow of drugs is accelerating what civil society workers and health officials describe as a growing crisis of despair among Iraq’s youth.

Public services have been ruined by corruption and mismanagement, and unemployment is rising as the [farmlands dry up and cities offer little succor](#).

“Our young people want an escape but they don’t understand what they’re taking,” said Enas Kareem, the founder of Iraq’s only charity dedicated to helping users. She said there are no solid figures for addiction rates, but some officials estimate that up to 40 percent of Iraqi’s youth in some areas have tried drugs.

Crystal meth floods the user with a sense of euphoria and invulnerability. When addiction sets in, paranoia takes over and the immune system breaks down as organs are pushed to failure.

In many cases, former addicts say that they started using drugs as solace from troubled lives. They spoke on condition that only their first names be used, due to the social stigma that comes with addiction.

Maher, 30-year-old baker in Baghdad, said that he fell in with the crowd that introduced him to alcohol and amphetamines after growing crippling loneliness at home. His sister was killed during the U.S. invasion, his brothers during the subsequent sectarian civil war, and his parents, three years later, in a car crash.

In Basra, a 37-year-old taxi driver, Firas, was struggling to stay awake on long journeys when a dealer showed him a white powder — it turned out to be methamphetamine — that he promised would unlock the secret to longer work hours and better earnings.

He used for three years before his wife begged relatives to intervene after he began physically assaulting her, he said.

In recognition of the growing problem, a law was passed in 2017 ordering the establishment of government-run rehabilitation facilities for addicts within the next two years, but five years later there are only three across the whole country, and only one in Basra.

“Say we have 30,000 addicts in Basra, and there are just 22 beds in which the patients need three months each to recover. Well, how does anyone get a place in those beds?” asked Gen. Ismail Ghanem, the head of Basra’s anti-drug unit.

When Firas went to bed at night, he’d ask himself whether he could ever stop using. When he woke in the morning, he would buy his next dose from the taxi hangar, where he worked.

He said that it was a volunteer with Kareem’s charity who saved him. The young man, Hassan Majeed al-Maliki, visited and said the nearby hospital had a spare bed.

And if there hadn’t been a bed?

“Then, I tell them that there is nothing we can do,” Maliki said.

Below the chandeliers of a luxury hotel in Baghdad in June, officials from all major ministries outlined their thoughts for how to tackle the crisis at its root. They spoke of the need to provide young people with spaces for sport and social activities, of the need to improve the education system and launch awareness campaigns. But no further action was taken in the months that followed, as political factions squabbled over the shape of a new government, preventing ministries from carrying out any new initiatives.

“Iraqis are very good at talking, but where’s the action? We don’t see it,” Ghanem said. “All we do is arrest people.”

That is precisely why many Maher’s friends have been scared to seek help for their addiction. “If they arrest someone taking drugs, they will beat the crap out of them,” he said.

New raids, more detainees

The drug squad’s first target was down an unpaved road without streetlights. They said that an informant had identified the location, and when the SWAT team stormed out with guns readied, a man in his 40s surrendered without a fight. Inside his one-story house, the unit found dozens of small pouches containing a white crystal-like substance that the officers believed to be meth, a set of small measuring scales and a loaded gun in each of the three rooms.

But at a house several districts to the north, the scene grew messier. Two women were already screaming obscenities at the police force by the time they reached the front gate. Four young men were pulled out for questioning, and a 17-year-old with messy hair was sobbing.

Inside the house, an officer found three tabs of captagon, an amphetamine, and one of the women began pleading with him. “It’s not drugs, it’s for his injury,” she kept saying.

Around the corner, another officer was scrolling through the teenager’s phone as the boy nodded frantically through his tears. The unit later said that he had been asked to cooperate with future investigations — a new informant to fuel the cycle of arrests.

It was past midnight by the time the convoy finally finished for the night. The streets were empty and the vehicles drove fast now, gliding down the highways and making sharp turns on street corners hung with pictures of the clerics and politicians.

Back at the station, the suspects were placed in a holding cell and brought for interrogation one by one. Last up was Moslem Dawoud, the alleged dealer whose home, police said, contained 16 doses of crystal meth. He kept his eyes on the floor for the most part and had stopped protesting his innocence.

An officer looked down at a faint tattoo on the man's forearm and asked if he'd been in prison before. Dawoud nodded.

"We can help you, you know," the officer told him.

Downstairs, the yells of other prisoners were floating out through the night air. After a long silence, Dawoud shared what he said was the name of his dealer.

Ehab looked down at the stack of case files on his desk.

"It's like this every night," he said blankly. "You do the raids, you do the paperwork, you're in a loop. Then you lie down, you wake up and you start again."

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HEADLINE	10/16 Georgia inmate stole \$11M while in prison
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/16/us/georgia-inmate-scam-billionaire.html
GIST	<p>Contraband cellphones are invaluable to inmates, but in the hands of Arthur Lee Cofield, who is serving a 14-year sentence for armed robbery at a Georgia state prison, a mobile phone turned out to be worth \$11 million, federal prosecutors said.</p> <p>From the prison in Butts County, about 45 miles south of Atlanta, Mr. Cofield called the Charles Schwab Corporation in June 2020 and impersonated a billionaire named S.K., who was later identified as Sidney Kimmel, according to a federal indictment.</p> <p>Mr. Cofield spoke with a company representative about opening a checking account. After Mr. Cofield was told he needed a form of identification and a utility bill, a co-conspirator texted him a picture of Mr. Kimmel's driver's license and a utility bill, prosecutors said.</p> <p>Mr. Cofield was so convincing that he persuaded the financial-services giant to transfer \$11 million from Mr. Kimmel's bank account to a precious metals dealer in Idaho to buy 6,106 American Eagle gold coins, prosecutors said.</p> <p>From there, Mr. Cofield used his contraband phone to hire a private security company to take the coins from Boise, Idaho, to Atlanta on a chartered plane. After the coins had been delivered, he contacted the owner of a six-bedroom house on 1.4 wooded acres in Atlanta and offered \$4.4 million for the property, prosecutors said.</p> <p>With the help of accomplices, Mr. Cofield paid \$720,000 cash as a down payment and later the full balance, also in cash, according to a federal indictment filed in December 2020.</p> <p>Jose Morales, who was the warden of the unit that housed Mr. Cofield, could not be reached. He told The Atlanta-Journal Constitution, which had previously reported on the case, that Mr. Cofield was "a shrewd, intelligent individual who could con you out of millions."</p> <p>Mr. Cofield, 31, was charged with several federal counts, including conspiracy to commit bank fraud, aggravated identity theft, money laundering and conspiracy to commit money laundering, according to court documents. He has pleaded not guilty. A lawyer for Mr. Cofield, Steve Sadow, declined to comment on Friday.</p> <p>Almost two years later, federal prosecutors and Mr. Sadow have a pressing problem: What to do with the Atlanta property?</p>

In court documents filed on Oct. 7, the two sides asked a judge for permission to sell the property so the proceeds could be held until Mr. Cofield's case is resolved. The indictment said that Mr. Cofield, if convicted, must forfeit any proceeds he received arising from his offenses.

In the filing, both parties said the property, which was valued at about \$3.5 million in 2020, is vacant, has been "rapidly deteriorating" and is at risk of losing its fair-market value because it has not been maintained.

The bank account that prosecutors said Mr. Cofield stole from belonged to Mr. Kimmel, a 94-year-old fashion mogul who has bankrolled box-office hits like "Moneyball," "United 93" and "Crazy Rich Asians," along with quirky flops that were nevertheless critically acclaimed, like "Lars and the Real Girl," a love story featuring a sex doll.

Some key details about the scheme remain unclear: Court documents do not reveal why Mr. Kimmel was targeted. And prosecutors did not say in the indictment how Mr. Cofield — who is also facing attempted murder charges in Fulton County, Ga., in an unrelated case — was able to acquire the phone, which they say he hid in his prison cell.

A spokeswoman for the Georgia Department of Corrections declined an interview request but said in a statement that the agency had a "robust plan" for cracking down on contraband phones.

The spokeswoman, Joan Heath, said that about 5,600 contraband phones were confiscated in fiscal year 2022, including more than 1,300 since July. Citing security reasons, she did not disclose details of the crackdown but said that "any and all resources available" were being used to curb the practice.

"One of those efforts includes conducting shakedowns across all of our facilities," she said, adding that the tactic had been in place for numerous years and had not been the result of Mr. Cofield's case.

Two co-conspirators, Eldridge Bennett and his daughter, Eliayah Bennett, also face charges in connection with the case and have pleaded not guilty, according to court documents. Their lawyers did not immediately respond to emails late on Friday.

Mr. Kimmel could not be reached. A spokeswoman for Charles Schwab said that the client in the case had been fully reimbursed.

"As soon as Schwab was aware of suspected fraudulent activity, we launched an investigation, initiated measures to protect the client's account, and notified the authorities," the spokeswoman, Tatiana Stead, said in an email. She declined to comment further because of the continuing investigation.

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HEADLINE	10/16 Authorities deny rumors SODO serial killer
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/authorities-deny-rumors-of-serial-killer-in-seattle-area
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Seattle Police have received several inquiries about an alleged serial killer attacking women in the SODO and Burien area, but say they are not investigating any such cases.</p> <p>Posts have been circulating on social media in Western Washington, warning of a serial killer who reportedly targeted women in their 30s. Some posts claim King County detectives approached them to warn of the killer.</p> <p>FOX 13 reached out to the King County Sheriff's Office, and they responded:</p> <p>"At the sheriff's office, we allow evidence to tell the story and do not deal in speculation. At this time, we have nothing to substantiate this here-say."</p>

	<p>"We are aware of unverified online social media reports that select death investigations, in the vicinity of South Park/SR 509, may share similar characteristics," wrote the sheriff's office on Twitter. "At this time, the Sheriff's Office has identified no evidence affirming this for any cases under our jurisdiction."</p> <p>This story will be updated as information becomes available.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 WSP: fatal road rage shooting Skykomish
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/wsp-investigating-fatal-road-rage-shooting-skykomish/FZ4N6VOMYNHABN767LEQXTGDIQ/
GIST	<p>Washington State Patrol is investigating after a woman was killed in a road rage shooting in Skykomish on Saturday night.</p> <p>According to WSP, the shooting happened around 7:48 p.m. on Highway 2 near milepost 63.</p> <p>Authorities said the shooting started as a road rage incident between the driver of a silver 2014 Kia Sorento and the driver of a Subaru SUV. When the driver of the Kia tried to create distance between themselves and the Subaru, an occupant of the Subaru fired a gun through a rear passenger window on the Kia.</p> <p>A 24-year-old Everett woman in the Kia was hit and killed.</p> <p>Authorities said the Subaru fled in an unknown direction.</p> <p>Detectives are asking for the public's help in locating the Subaru. Witnesses described it as a dark-colored SUV with a roof-mounted cargo basket on top.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/15 Tacoma police: 4 overnight shootings
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/woman-injured-drive-by-shooting-tacoma/ES2VYJAG5RGJXP327Y5DMYWIJY/
GIST	<p>Tacoma police are investigating after a 29-year-old woman was shot in a drive-by Saturday night.</p> <p>According to police, officers responded to the shooting in the 5600 block of South J Street just after 9 p.m.</p> <p>Police said bullets entered a residence and hit the woman. She was taken to an area hospital with life-threatening injuries.</p> <p>About an hour later, around 10 p.m., officers were called to a shooting in the 2200 block of East 56th street. Shots were fired into an occupied residence, but no one was hurt.</p> <p>Around 10:15 p.m., officers responded to another shooting, this time in the 4400 block of R Street. Shots were again fired into an occupied residence, but no one was injured.</p> <p>Around 11 p.m., officers received reports of a shooting in the 9000 block of South Thompson Avenue. Shots were fired into an occupied residence, but no one was injured.</p> <p>Investigators are looking into the possibility that the last three shootings may be related but have given no indication that they are related to the shooting on South J Street.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Atlanta university shooting: 4 wounded
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/4-wounded-shooting-clark-atlanta-university-library-rcna52480

GIST	<p>ATLANTA — Four people were shot, including three students, during Clark Atlanta University’s homecoming outside a campus library early Sunday, authorities said.</p> <p>A large group of people were listening to a DJ near Atlanta University Center’s Robert W. Woodruff Library around 12:30 a.m. when officers on patrol in the area heard gunshots, Atlanta police said.</p> <p>A preliminary investigation found three students and another person were wounded when shots were fired from a vehicle, Clark Atlanta University said.</p> <p>One of the victims was grazed and refused medical attention, Atlanta police said. Three others were taken to a hospital, though they were conscious and alert.</p> <p>Clark Atlanta is part of Atlanta University Center’s consortium of historically Black colleges.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/17 Iran prison fire death toll rises to 8
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iran-prison-fire-death-toll-rises-inmates-killed-91608759
GIST	<p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates -- Iran's judiciary raised the death toll Monday in a blaze at Tehran's notorious Evin prison, saying that at least eight prisoners were killed as protests continue nationwide.</p> <p>Details still remain scarce over the fire at Evin prison, which broke out on Saturday night as nationwide anti-government protests triggered by the death of a young woman in police custody entered a fifth week.</p> <p>The judiciary's Mizan news agency offered the new toll, saying the prisoners had succumbed to their injuries Sunday from the incident.</p> <p>It said all those dead had been held on theft charges. Mizan described the incident as a “fight between inmates and a fire,” though it offered no evidence to support the claim. Activists outside of Iran say they remain skeptical of the Iranian government's claims, particularly as their recent descriptions of the nationwide protests have drastically differed with those on the ground.</p> <p>The semiofficial Fars news agency also reported that the death toll from the blaze has doubled, and said six inmates remain hospitalized following the fire.</p> <p>Flames and thick smoke rising from Tehran’s Evin Prison had been widely visible Saturday night. In online videos, gunshots and explosions could be heard in the area of the prison.</p> <p>The blaze was extinguished after several hours and no detainees escaped, state media said.</p> <p>Authorities have attempted to distance the events at the prison from the ongoing protests, while state media has offered conflicting accounts of the violence. Hundreds are being held at Evin, where human rights groups have reported repeated abuses of prisoners.</p> <p>The protests erupted after public outrage over the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in police custody. She was arrested by Iran’s morality police in Tehran for violating the Islamic Republic’s strict dress code. Iran’s government insists Amini was not mistreated in police custody, but her family says her body showed bruises and other signs of beating after she was detained.</p> <p>President Joe Biden, on a weekend trip to Oregon, said the Iranian “government is so oppressive” and that he had an “enormous amount of respect for people marching in the streets.”</p> <p>Evin Prison, which holds detainees facing security-related charges and includes dual citizens, has been charged by rights groups with abusing inmates. The facility has long been known for holding political prisoners as well as those with ties to the West who have been used by Iran as bargaining chips in international negotiations.</p>

HEADLINE	10/16 Chicago weekend: 25 shot, 5 killed
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/13-year-fatally-shot-chicago-weekend-violence/story?id=91588703
GIST	<p>A 13-year-old boy was among five people killed in unrelated shootings across Chicago over the weekend, which also left 20 others injured, according to police.</p> <p>The violent weekend in the nation's third largest city erupted despite a 20% drop in shootings in Chicago through the end of summer, according to Chicago police crime statistics. Homicides have also plummeted 16% from last year, according to the statistics.</p> <p>Despite recent efforts by police to curb shootings, at least 25 people were shot in Chicago between Friday evening and Sunday afternoon, according to a review of weekend crime incidents by ABC News.</p> <p>Last weekend, 30 people were shot, two fatally, in gun violence across the Chicago, police said.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Long Island NY shooting: 4 teens injured
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/teens-long-island-wounded-drive-shooting-house-party/story?id=91590654
GIST	<p>Four Long Island teenagers were injured in a drive-by shooting outside “a large house party” on Saturday, Nassau County police said.</p> <p>Law enforcement said the shooting happened close to midnight in Freeport, Long Island, on the Babylon Turnpike.</p> <p>The suspected shooter was driving southbound on the turnpike when they fired multiple shots near the party, according to police.</p> <p>The four people, a 16-year-old girl, two 16-year-old boys and a 14-year-old boy, were taken to a nearby hospital for treatment.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/15 US, Canada armored vehicles to Haiti police
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-canada-send-armored-vehicles-bolster-haitis-police-91565841
GIST	<p>SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico -- The U.S. and Canada sent armored vehicles and other supplies to Haiti on Saturday to help police fight a powerful gang amid a pending request from the Haitian government for the immediate deployment of foreign troops.</p> <p>A U.S. State Department statement said the equipment was bought by Haiti’s government, but it did not provide further details on the supplies flown on military aircraft to the capital of Port-au-Prince.</p> <p>A spokesman for the U.S. military’s Southern Command said he could not provide further details on the supplies sent, though he added it was a joint operation involving the U.S. Air Force and Royal Canadian Air Force.</p> <p>“This equipment will assist (Haiti’s National Police) in their fight against criminal actors who are fomenting violence and disrupting the flow of critically-needed humanitarian assistance, hindering efforts to halt the spread of cholera,” the State Department said.</p> <p>The Pan American Health Organization said there are more than 560 suspected cases of cholera, some 300 hospitalizations and at least 35 deaths, with experts warning the numbers are likely much higher than what i's being reported.</p>

	<p>The equipment arrived more than a month after one of Haiti's most powerful gangs surrounded a fuel terminal and demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry. Demonstrators also have blocked roads in major cities to protest a sharp rise in fuel prices after Henry announced in early September that his administration could no longer afford to subsidize fuel.</p> <p>Since then, gas stations have closed, hospitals have cut back on services and banks and grocery stores open on a limited basis as fuel, water and other supplies dwindle across Haiti.</p> <p>The owners of the fuel terminal announced Saturday that armed men had attacked their installations for a second time and fled with more than 28,000 gallons of petroleum products after overpowering surveillance and emergency personnel at the facility.</p> <p>It was the second time this week that armed men broke into the terminal, which stores more than 10 million gallons of gasoline and diesel and more than 800,000 gallons of kerosene.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Gunmen kill 12, injure 3 in Mexico bar
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/16/americas/gunmen-kills-12-people-mexico-bar-intl-hnk/index.html
GIST	<p>CNN — Mexican authorities are searching for gunmen who killed at least 12 people and injured three more after opening fire in a bar in central Mexico on Saturday evening.</p> <p>Gunshots were reported at the bar in the city of Irapuato in the central state of Guanajuato at close to 8 p.m. local time Saturday, the city's Secretary of Citizen Safety said in a statement.</p> <p>Paramedics confirmed the deaths of six men and six women after arriving on scene, according to the statement. It is unclear who the victims are and how many gunmen were involved in the shooting.</p> <p>A search operation for the attackers is underway with support from Guanajuato's Secretary for Public Safety as well as the state's prosecutor general's office, the Secretary of National Defense, and the National Guard.</p> <p>This is the second mass shooting in less than a month in the state of Guanajuato, which has been convulsed in recent years by brutal turf wars between rival drug gangs, according to Reuters.</p> <p>The state is a major manufacturing hub and production site for many of the world's top carmakers.</p> <p>It is attractive to drug cartels for the same reason it is to auto manufacturers: road and rail networks that lead straight to the US border.</p> <p>President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has struggled to deal with gang violence since taking office in late 2018, according to Reuters.</p> <p>Although the number of homicides has fallen slightly this year, Lopez Obrador's term is set to be the bloodiest in recent history.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Pittsburgh shooting: 3 dead, 1 wounded
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/trending/3-people-dead-1-wounded-pittsburgh-shooting/3UCNRQOG4ZB5LHMWHANXUHKGY/
GIST	<p>PITTSBURGH — Three people were killed and another was wounded after a shooting in Pittsburgh on Saturday night, authorities said.</p> <p>The shooting happened at the Allegheny Commons on the city's north side at about 10:08 p.m. EDT, WPXI-TV reported.</p>

	<p>One woman was pronounced dead at the scene, Public Safety spokesperson Cara Cruz told reporters. Another woman and a man were pronounced dead at an area hospital, Cruz said.</p> <p>A fourth victim, a man, was wounded and went to an area hospital on his own, according to WPXI.</p> <p>The names of the victims have not been released, and police did not say whether there was a lone gunman or more shooters.</p> <p>The circumstances around what led to the shooting have not been revealed.</p> <p>According to police, no one is in custody and no arrests have been made, WPXI reported.</p> <p>An investigation is ongoing.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Detroit-area muscle car theft ring arrests
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/postal-worker-holdup-leads-to-muscle-car-theft-ring-arrests/
GIST	<p>DETROIT (AP) — Thieves are using cloned key fobs to steal Dodge muscle cars and other high-powered vehicles directly from dealerships and even automakers in Michigan, then selling them for tens of thousands of dollars less than their value, according to authorities and court records.</p> <p>For one Ohio-based theft ring, it all came crashing down after a January holdup of a U.S. postal worker led authorities to connect several men to brazen car thefts in the Detroit area, long home to the country's biggest automakers, including Dodge, which is now owned by international conglomerate Stellantis.</p> <p>Investigators then discovered that new Chargers, Challengers, Durangos and Ram pickups worth \$50,000 to \$100,000 were turning up in Ohio, Indianapolis and East Cost shipping ports after being sold on the street for \$3,500 to \$15,000, according to a criminal complaint.</p> <p>Thieves in the Detroit area are primarily going after Dodge vehicles with Hellcat engines, including Chargers and Challengers — “the fast ones,” Sgt. Jerry Hanna with the Macomb Auto Theft Squad said. “If a patrol car gets them, they are not stopping and they’re faster than patrol cars. They’re 150 mph all day,” he said.</p> <p>Instead of stealing them off the street, they’re driving them straight off dealership and assembly plant lots.</p> <p>Just this year, about a half-dozen vehicles — primarily Dodge Ram TRX pickups — were taken from a lot outside an assembly plant in Macomb County.</p> <p>After security measures were stepped up at some lots with Dodge vehicles, more than a dozen 2022 Ford F-150 Raptor pickup trucks were swiped from a plant lot in June in suburban Dearborn. More than a dozen Ford Mustang’s were stolen in early September from the automaker’s assembly plant in Flat Rock, southeast of Detroit.</p> <p>Thieves have targeted Dodges by using handheld electronic “pro pads” — a locksmith’s tool that can clone keys by plugging into interior ports in the vehicles, according to the federal complaint in the Ohio case.</p> <p>Authorities weren’t looking for stolen vehicles when they stopped Devin Rice on Jan. 31 after a postal worker in Shaker Heights, outside Cleveland, was robbed at gunpoint of a mailbox key. But court records show that a search of his car and then his home turned up not just stolen mail, bogus checks, and credit and debit cards, but also a Ram pickup, a Range Rover SUV and a Dodge with a Hellcat engine — all stolen.</p> <p>Rice and others were indicted in federal court in Ohio in June. Jaylen Harris, Lavelle Jones and Hakim Benjamin are charged with conspiracy and interstate transport of stolen vehicles. Rice, Harris and Jones also are charged with mail theft. Their trials are scheduled next year.</p>

Harris' attorney declined comment. The AP left email and phone messages seeking comment from attorneys for Benjamin, Rice and Jones.

Harris told the FBI that he and Jones had been in contact through Instagram with people in the Detroit area to get stolen vehicles, according to the complaint. Harris said those thieves "were also selling to buyers in other areas, including Chicago and Indianapolis," the complaint said.

Videos posted on social media show how the high-horsepower vehicles outpaced and evaded police. A judge stated in a detention order that "Benjamin drove a 2022 Dodge Challenger valued at \$95,000 at 120 mph down Ohio's State Route 2 on a Sunday evening in February."

"Spike strips were eventually needed to remind Benjamin that the law required him to comply with police orders" the judge wrote.

About two years ago, police in Ohio's Ottawa County began noticing the vehicles blasting along state Route 2. The sheriff's office got calls about reckless driving, Capt. Aaron Leist said.

"These cars are going 140-150 mph. All have the Hellcat engines. We had a lot of pursuits. We did not catch them all," he said.

Investigators learned the vehicles mostly were being stolen in the Detroit area and taken to Cleveland. Some also were destined for Memphis, Tennessee, Leist said.

"We started working with (Stellantis) in early 2022," he said. "They would call us and tell us 'We have these cars missing.'"

A spokeswoman for Stellantis declined to comment.

Added security measures at some lots have included concrete barriers, according to law enforcement.

Then last fall, a dealership's showroom northwest of Detroit was broken into. Someone drove a Ram pickup through the building's glass wall and "all the other cars followed suit," said Jeff Schneider, general manager at Szott Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram in Highland Township.

"I think they were able to find some keys in a desk drawer and used them," he added.

Police tracked one of the stolen cars, a Durango Hellcat SRT valued at about \$100,000, to a suburb northwest of Detroit. The driver had crashed into a brick wall while fleeing. A 2021 Dodge Durango GT, 2021 Dodge Ram TRX and a 2017 Dodge Charger Hellcat SRT were later recovered.

Authorities arrested four people. They were not believed to have stolen the vehicles, but to have paid \$5,000 for one.

"In the Detroit area they are selling them for like \$3,500," Hanna said. "Once they get that money in their pockets they go out and steal another one."

For dealerships and their insurance companies, the cost is high. Even recovered vehicles can't be sold for what they were once worth.

Schneider said his dealership came up with an "old school" solution: parking boots.

"It's a deterrent that works amazingly," he said. "We put boots on all the Hellcats."

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SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/virginia-shooting-outdoor-gathering-leaves-120256584.html
GIST	<p>Gunshots fired into a crowd at an outdoor gathering in Virginia early Sunday left eight people wounded, officials said.</p> <p>The shooting happened around 2:20 a.m. in the 1500 block of Devon Lane in Harrisonburg, where an unknown individual or individuals fired multiple times into the crowd, the city tweeted Sunday.</p> <p>The eight shooting victims, ages 18 to 27, all suffered non-life-threatening injuries, police said. Five of those injured were treated at Sentara RMH, while three others were transferred to UVA.</p> <p>Harrisonburg police are investigating whether there was more than one shooter.</p> <p>No arrests have been made as of early Sunday. Police have yet to identify any suspects.</p> <p>Investigators believe the incident was isolated to the gathering, and there is no threat to the public.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Seattle PD negligent sex trafficking probe?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/times-watchdog/women-accuse-seattle-police-of-ignoring-sex-trafficking-claims-against-hip-hop-artist-raz-simone/
GIST	<p>The tape recorder clicked on. It was a cold night in early December 2020 when William Guyer, a veteran Seattle police detective, asked a young woman to recount months of alleged abuse and sexual assault.</p> <p>“Can you start off with,” Guyer paused, “how you first came in contact with this suspect?”</p> <p>Angelica Campbell, a 26-year-old artist from Chicago, had filed a protection order against Solomon “Raz” Simone, a Seattle hip-hop artist. Campbell told police Simone paid for her to move to Seattle earlier that year, then forced her into sex work at a strip club, starved and assaulted her, all under the guise of a romantic relationship. When she refused to sell herself on the prostitution track on Aurora Avenue North, she said, he evicted her from a house he owned.</p> <p>“He’s really manipulative, and he’s been doing this for a while,” Campbell told Guyer and another detective that night. “I hope, I hope, I could help end it.”</p> <p>Guyer, 60, had been a vice detective for much of his 22-year career in Seattle, and was familiar with Simone.</p> <p>Since 2017, at least eight people — six women and the parents of two others — told Guyer and Seattle police that Simone entangled women in a multistate sex trafficking scheme, with the promise of love and lucrative jobs, then coerced them into sex work in Seattle, New York, Portland, Las Vegas and other cities. Some of the alleged crimes dated back to 2012.</p> <p>They said Simone required them to earn \$1,000 a day, which he collected, isolated them from their families, tracked their movements and controlled their eating habits. Like Campbell, women told police they had been choked, beaten, threatened, raped and in some cases imprisoned for days in claustrophobic sleeping containers. Women told police Simone forced them to call him “master,” “king” or “God.”</p> <p>Simone has denied these allegations. Police have never charged or arrested him for these alleged crimes.</p> <p>Seattle’s handling of the allegations against Simone illustrate the complexity and consequences of failing to police sex trafficking. Washington was the first state to criminalize trafficking nearly 20 years ago. But law enforcement across the state, including Seattle, has struggled to use these statutes effectively and train officers to recognize and help trafficking victims. Prosecutions involving adult victims also have a higher burden of proof than for minors, and must show evidence of force, fraud or coercion.</p>

Even as the #MeToo movement has taken hold nationwide, Angelica Campbell and other women, who spoke with The Seattle Times and KUOW, said their hours of police interviews felt like screaming into a void.

As their complaints languished with police, five women, including Campbell, filed a civil lawsuit in 2021 against Simone and his recording label, Black Umbrella, alleging that Simone conspired to “ensnare, imprison, and exploit” them for profit.

In September, they added the Seattle Police Department as a defendant for negligent investigation of their claims.

Guyer, who left SPD over the city’s vaccine mandate, declined to answer questions for this story, citing a new job with the Kent Police Department. In a short interview outside his home in September, he said, “My career goal was always, ‘Fight the bad, protect the good, help the hurting.’”

“You know, every one of those girls I care about,” he said.

SPD declined to make police Chief Adrian Diaz available for an interview. In a statement, SPD declined to answer questions about its investigation into Simone, citing the pending lawsuit.

It noted that trafficking cases are “often complex cases involving violent suspects, geographically expansive crimes, and victims without a support system. SPD’s approach to these cases is trauma-informed and victim-centered,” it said.

The FBI also has been investigating Simone’s alleged trafficking crimes since at least 2021 but has not taken any action.

Ellery Johannessen, an attorney for the women, said he wants to determine whether the failures in the case are because of one detective, the Police Department or a larger system failing to properly handle trafficking crimes.

Seattle police “had actionable, credible information from multiple sources,” he said. “They did virtually nothing.”

A hearing in the lawsuit, involving SPD’s efforts to be dismissed from the case, is scheduled for Friday. The city argues that state case law does not recognize claims for “negligent investigation” by police.

Even as women reported abuse, Simone’s star rose. He opened a seven-city tour with Macklemore and performed at music festivals. One of his music videos racked up more than 700,000 views on YouTube. In 2020, Simone positioned himself as a leader of the Capitol Hill Organized Protest or CHOP, where videos showed him pulling a gun out of the trunk of his white Tesla.

Text messages show Seattle’s fire chief and the mayor’s office coordinated with Simone during the protests, adding authority to his self-appointed role. At the same time, the Seattle police gang unit wrote in an internal email that he was an “associate” of the Deuce 8 street gang and warned that he might be armed, department records show.

Simone has repeatedly denied that he harmed, confined or trafficked these women, but did not answer multiple calls and texts for this story. In an interview with KUOW last year, he said the accusations are false and the women are trying to shake him down.

“It’s been a plan they put together years back,” Simone said. “The money’s on the line, and they’re using it like a class-action lawsuit.”

Paul Beattie, an attorney for Simone, said by email that neither he nor his client would discuss the case, adding, “At this point, these are essentially only allegations — not proven facts.”

“There has to be something we can do”

In August 2017, Pearl, a 27-year-old living in Las Vegas, called and emailed Seattle police, asking for help. She was pointed to Guyer. For more than a year, she and at least two other women were forced into sex work in the lucrative clubs of Las Vegas, 12 hours a day, seven days a week, by Simone, she told Guyer in an email.

“We are afraid for our lives,” she wrote.

The Seattle Times is not using the names of several women in this story because of safety and privacy concerns. Pearl asked to be referred to by her stage name.

Pearl sent Guyer emails and text messages containing photographs and videos that supported her allegations, which are also referenced in court filings. The Seattle Times and KUOW also reviewed hundreds of additional images, screen shots, emails, text messages and medical records, obtained in public disclosure requests and from Simone’s accusers.

Attached to the emails were copies of the protective orders Pearl and another woman, then 23, had filed against Simone in Las Vegas. Their handwritten allegations asked that Seattle police provide them protection from him.

Handheld videos show Pearl’s alleged confinement in the Black Umbrella office — its Airport Way South location just two blocks from the police station where Guyer would later interview Campbell. One video pans over four white plastic sleeping pods, stacked two by two, roughly 6 by 3 feet in size. In another video, Pearl sits inside a pod, her blue-gray eyes puffy from crying, and her temple and cheek cut with self-inflicted red gashes.

Simone confined her in a pod for three days that spring after she begged him to let her stop stripping and prostituting in Las Vegas, she told Guyer and later described in interviews with reporters. While inside the container, she heard Simone and other men come and go. But he only opened the pod door to silence her screaming, she said.

The abuse she said she experienced had been ongoing for 18 months, since Simone first paid for her to come to Seattle, Pearl told Guyer in interviews and written testimony.

“He has choked me to the point of passing out. He raped me when I didn’t come home on time. He decided what I ate and drank,” Pearl wrote in protection order documents.

The demands to make money were so severe she developed a kidney infection. After surgeons placed a stent in her urethra, Simone raped her with the plastic tube still in her body, she said in interviews and told police.

“thanks for all the info,” Guyer responded 13 hours later. “I’m out of the office for a few days but will start digging through this ... Your [sic] doing a good job keep fighting!!”

Pearl offered to testify and put Guyer in touch with other alleged victims — including a teenager — but his responses became intermittent, email records show. In October, after Simone was added to the SXSW music festival in Austin, she emailed Guyer again with a link to Simone’s Facebook post:

“Looking for a girl for a video,” Simone wrote. “Doesn’t matter where in the world you are.”

After two months of silence, Guyer wrote back. He told Pearl that the case was unlikely to move forward unless the teen girl decided to go on the record.

“I am bewildered that our justice system cannot prosecute him unless you have underage testimony,” Pearl replied. “There has to be something we can do.” Guyer did not write back.

Public records obtained by The Seattle Times and KUOW show Guyer was, however, talking to Simone. In the fall of 2017, Guyer and another detective met with Simone at a Tully's coffee shop, and Simone shared hundreds of text messages with Guyer, emails show.

Simone said in a December 2020 interview with KUOW that he showed police his communication with various women. "I talked to police officers," Simone said, "and they just figured it was a mess."

The case lay dormant for three more years.

For Pearl, her life contracted. In the weeks after she escaped her trafficker, security footage, obtained and reviewed by The Seattle Times and KUOW, appears to show him breaking into the garage of her apartment complex. Simone now knew she had ratted him out. And law enforcement wouldn't help her.

Guyer's lack of response to her allegations, she said, "put a nail in my coffin. It made me afraid to go out in the world for a long time."

Policing sex trafficking

No trafficking case is simple. The criminal justice system favors sex trafficking prosecutions involving juvenile witnesses, experts say, in part because the burden of proof is lower. If a minor is involved in a commercial sex act, it is automatically considered trafficking because they cannot consent.

Sex trafficking is defined as an individual being recruited, purchased, harbored or transported, and then forced or coerced into sex acts for another person's profit.

But for an adult, a prosecutor must prove there has been force, fraud or coercion. That does not mean the adult isn't a victim, but the evidence of harm — like signs of physical and emotional abuse that often leave little trace — must be explicit.

"Sadly, it makes a big difference as to whether something is pursued criminally or not," said Meredith Dank, a professor at New York University and an expert on human trafficking. "There is a lot of evidence to show prosecutors are more likely to take a case if it is minors because it is easier."

Guyer's career has focused on cases involving teenage girls. His personnel file includes letters of gratitude from family members and praise for his "outstanding support" for Operation Cross Country, the FBI's national campaign to rescue children forced into prostitution.

In 2013, he told Fox13 News: "The home run is to find a young juvenile girl who is ready to be rescued."

He later told ABC's "Dateline" that he aims to get victims "to the point where they can't wait to get on the stand."

Since 2013, Guyer has referred 10 cases to King County prosecutors. Of these, only one involved an adult trafficking victim: Angelica Campbell.

In response to questions from The Seattle Times and KUOW, Guyer wrote in an email: "These heinous crimes are taken very seriously and we work hard to investigate and seek justice for the victims. Unfortunately, in some cases the facts and evidence do not always lend themselves to successful prosecution."

This is consistent with SPD's overall record. In the past nine years, the department referred to prosecutors just two cases that explicitly cite human trafficking, both declined for insufficient evidence. And just over 1% of all cases it opened for sex crimes have included the charge of human trafficking, the majority since 2017.

In addition, Seattle police participated in at least six federal trafficking investigations for Washington state since 2015.

Prosecutors argue these numbers are low because the trafficking statute itself is cumbersome and, like using arrows in a quiver, it is easier to use different statutes to prosecute similar crimes, including knowingly selling another person for sex and profiting off the sex work of a minor.

Of this larger set of crimes, Seattle police have referred a median of 10 cases a year between 2015 and 2021. The majority, just over 60% of SPD's referrals, involved crimes against children.

These numbers are striking for another reason. Washington considers itself a national leader in anti-trafficking, boasting the most stringent law in the country, and since 2002 has passed nearly 40 related laws.

Yet the state got off to such a slow start of holding criminals accountable for trafficking crimes that no charges were brought for four years. The state Attorney General's Office intervened in 2008, finding, "the law wasn't being used because victims of human trafficking were not being recognized as such."

The Urban Institute estimated in 2007 that Seattle's underground commercial sex industry economy more than doubled since the first law passed, to \$112 million per year.

Most years, more than 200 cases are reported annually to the National Human Trafficking Hotline for Washington.

A state task force told the Legislature that trafficking is "rarely identified," even by law enforcement, which often jails or charges trafficked individuals with prostitution and other crimes instead of recognizing their victimization.

By 2014, a state report found that half of Washington jurisdictions had never investigated trafficking cases. Agencies didn't understand "the problem of sex trafficking itself," and many were unaware the laws existed, although training has since improved.

This is reflected in SPD crime statistics. Since the attorney general first highlighted problems with under-identifying trafficking crimes, 3,600 cases were opened for prostitution, compared with 50 cited from human trafficking offenses.

"I need everything"

Guyer hadn't spoken to Pearl in three years when she received a text in January 2021.

"I don't know if you remember me," Guyer wrote.

It was conspicuous timing. Over the last month, Angelica Campbell had detailed her experience to Guyer, and KUOW had published the first public account of alleged crimes committed by Simone, and included the story of yet another woman who said Simone harmed her, Amanda Branch.

Guyer also had been made aware of at least three additional women involved with Simone, including one Simone had allegedly trafficked since she was 15, according to his own police notes.

Guyer arranged an interview with Pearl and King County prosecutor Ben Gauen, conducted over Zoom.

After that meeting, Gauen emailed Guyer and another detective with an urgent laundry list with 19 bullet points, including all prior reports, interviews with other victims and Simone, as well as Guyer's text messages with Simone.

"Several of the items are things that can be produced ASAP," Gauen wrote in an email obtained by The Seattle Times and KUOW. "I need everything," Gauen added, underlining the sentence for emphasis.

This information would have strengthened the case, but the county prosecutor's office said police never provided it. Guyer did not answer questions about why it was not part of the final case file.

In summer 2021, four years after Pearl reported her trafficking allegations against Simone, Guyer sent Campbell's case to the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office for a second opinion.

The 228-page case file had no mention of rape, or of the allegations made by other women. Guyer recommended against charging Simone. Gauen agreed.

"Declining to bring a case should not be construed as saying that she's not a victim," Gauen said about Campbell. "Oftentimes, we believe people and there still, unfortunately, is insufficient evidence to make a charging decision."

Last avenue for justice

A Seattle court declined Campbell's domestic violence protective order, finding she and Simone were not in an eligible dating relationship. So, Campbell got an attorney and filed a civil suit.

The case, she said, is her last avenue for justice. If the women win, they could be awarded financial damages for pain and suffering, including post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as for lost wages and medical bills.

When Campbell moved to Seattle to work as an artist, she believed she would be starting a family and having kids with Simone. "I told the people I was close to that I was going to marry this really cool guy, but when I got off the plane, his whole personality had changed."

Two years later, she still feels unsafe leaving home, and struggles to date or make friends, unsure who to trust. She has reported to police that she was followed by Simone, but they have said they can't help her without a protective order in place.

The bite marks she told police Simone left on her shoulder during sex have disappeared. But she said she feels uncomfortable describing what happened to her, even to a therapist.

Learning about other women, though, like Pearl and Branch, allowed her to unlock memories and helped her make sense of her own trauma. And she has started painting again.

In a recent acrylic painting she calls "The Big Bang," she depicts a Black woman facing away from the viewer, a gun in her thong and her middle finger up.

It is based on a theory in physics, that all creation, beginning with the birth of the universe, has the capacity to regenerate.

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HEADLINE	10/14 Interpol arrests 'Black Axe' syndicate
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/interpol-arrests-black-axe-cybercrime-syndicate-members/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>INTERPOL has arrested over 70 suspected members of the 'Black Axe' cybercrime syndicate, with two believed to be responsible for \$1.8 million in financial fraud.</p> <p>The suspects were arrested as part of 'Operation Jackal,' an international law enforcement operation between September 26 and 30, 2022, in South Africa.</p> <p>Black Axe was founded in 1977 in Nigeria and is considered one of the world's most far-reaching and dangerous crime syndicates.</p>

The crime syndicate first became involved with cybercrime in 2015, suspected of orchestrating numerous [romance and "419 scams."](#)

"Black Axe and similar groups are responsible for the majority of the world's cyber-enabled financial fraud as well as many other serious crimes, according to evidence analyzed by INTERPOL's Financial Crime and Anti-Corruption Centre (IFCACC) and national law enforcement," explains [INTERPOL's statement](#) on the operation.

These financial gains are reflected in the assets seized by law enforcement during the raids, including tens of thousands of USD in cash, expensive cars, luxury items, and 12,000 mobile SIM cards.

By analyzing the seized evidence, the police could freeze €1,200,000 in the suspects' bank accounts, identify and arrest another 75 individuals, and conduct 49 targeted property searches.

The arrests yielded 13 analytical reports, seven INTERPOL "purple notices" to detail the modus operandi of the criminals, and six INTERPOL "red notices" targeting internationally-wanted fugitives.

Interpol also highlights the success of its new anti-money laundering rapid response protocol mechanism (ARRP), which was deployed for the first time in 'Operation Jackal.'

"The ARRP is a game-changer in the fight against global financial crime, where speed and international cooperation are crucial to intercepting illicit funds before they disappear into the pockets of money mules abroad," said Rory Corcoran, Director of IFCACC.

"INTERPOL's Global Financial Crime Task Force has shown remarkable effectiveness in disrupting illicit financial flows, bringing together cyber and finance experts across sectors to track and cut off criminal money trails."

Last month, INTERPOL [dismantled a sextortion ring](#) operating from Singapore and Hong Kong, arresting 12 suspects for further investigation.

In June, the international police force [seized \\$50 million](#) and arrested thousands suspected of participating in business email compromise (BEC) scams.

In May, INTERPOL traced down three Nigerians in Lagos suspected of [deploying remote access trojans \(RATs\)](#) to steal account credentials and reroute financial transactions.

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HEADLINE	10/14 Raleigh NC: 15yr-old mass shooter kills 5
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/y3pq8j/15-year-old-mass-shooter-raleigh
GIST	<p>A 15-year-old boy shot and killed five people on a walking trail in Raleigh, North Carolina, on Thursday evening.</p> <p>The teenager evaded police capture for hours before he was finally cornered and arrested. The alleged shooter was later identified in multiple local reports as 15-year-old Austin Thompson. Eye-witnesses told local media that the shooter was dressed in camouflage gear.</p> <p>The shooting began on Thursday at about 5 p.m. in a residential area along the Neuse River Greenway trail, in the northeastern part of the city, the police said.</p> <p>At 5:13 p.m., officers from a number of law enforcement agencies responded to an active shooter call. Residents were told to stay indoors as the officers searched the area for the shooter.</p> <p>Police searched door-to-door in the Hedingham neighborhood and along the Neuse River Trail for hours before containing the suspect in an area off Old Milburnie Road.</p>

By 8 p.m., the suspect was cornered in a barn off Buffalo Road, [a law enforcement source told ABC11](#), and by 9:40 p.m. the Raleigh Police Department tweeted that the suspect was in custody.

The shooter was transferred to an area hospital, where he remains in critical condition.

Among the five people who were killed by the shooter was 29-year-old Gabriel Torres, an off-duty police officer on his way to work, and 16-year-old James Thompson, who was reportedly the shooter's brother. Three women were killed; 52-year-old Nicole Conners, 49-year-old Susan Karnatz, and Mary Marshall, 35.

Officers were seen [searching a home on Friday morning](#) near the site of the shooting.

At a press conference on Friday morning, Raleigh Police Department Chief Estella Patterson shared few details about the shooting while praising her officers response to the incident.

"We don't have answers as to why this tragedy occurred," Patterson said. "What I can tell you is that the Raleigh Police Department and the Raleigh community is resilient and we stand strong and we will heal and we will be stronger as a result of what has occurred."

"Tonight, terror has reached our doorstep," Gov. Roy Cooper said at a news conference at Raleigh City Hall on Thursday night. "The nightmare of every community has come to Raleigh. This is a senseless, horrific and infuriating act of violence that has been committed."

Raleigh Mayor Mary-Ann Baldwin echoed his sentiments and called for tighter gun control. "This is a sad and tragic day for the city of Raleigh. We must stop this mindless violence in America. We must address gun violence."

Thursday's mass shooting was the 25th mass killing this year, according to a [Mass Killings database](#) maintained by the Associated Press, USA TODAY, and Northeastern University. A mass killing is defined as when four or more people are killed excluding the perpetrator.

The age of the shooter is also important to this case. In recent years there has been a noticeable downward shift in the age of those perpetrating mass shootings; six of the nine deadliest mass shootings in the U.S. since 2018 were [perpetrated by people who were 21 or younger](#). Prior to 2000, the vast majority of mass shootings were perpetrated by men in their mid-20s, 30s and 40s.

This year alone has seen two mass shootings perpetrated by 18-year-olds. In Buffalo, an [18-year allegedly shot and killed](#) 10 people at Topps Supermarket in May, and weeks later, in Uvalde, [an 18-year-old shot and killed 19 students and 2 teachers](#) in a massacre at Robb Elementary School.

There is historical precedent, however, for young mass shooters in the U.S. In 1996, 14-year-old Barry Dale Loukaitis shot and killed his algebra teacher and two students at Frontier Middle School in Washington State. And in 2013, 15-year-old Nehemiah Griego shot his parents and three younger siblings in South Valley, New Mexico. In 2008, Nicholas Waggoner Browning killed his two parents and two siblings in Maryland just before his 16th birthday.

Patterson refused to answer any questions during the press conference relating to the identity or motive of the shooter, but Gov. Cooper said those questions will eventually be answered.

"Today we're sad. We're angry, and we want to know the answers to all the questions," Cooper said. "Those questions will be answered, some today and more over time but I think we all know the core truth. No neighborhood, no parent, no child, no grandparent, no one should feel this fear in their communities. As policymakers, we cannot and we will not turn away from what has happened here. We must be resolved to make changes, and to succeed."

HEADLINE	10/15 Stockton police nab serial killer suspect
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/stockton-police-say-an-arrest-had-been-made-in-serial-killings?ref=home
GIST	<p>Police say they have finally nabbed a suspected serial killer responsible for a string of killings that have plagued Stockton and Oakland—and cops stopped him just as he was about to claim another victim.</p> <p>“Early this morning he was on a mission to kill, he was out hunting” when he was stopped around 2:22 a.m., Stockton Police Chief Stanley McFadden said at a Saturday press conference.</p> <p>“He was wearing dark clothing and had a mask around his neck. He was also armed with a firearm when he was taken into custody. We are sure we stopped another killing,” McFadden said, identifying the alleged killer as 43-year-old Wesley Brownlee.</p> <p>Brownlee is now in custody and set to be arraigned on Tuesday afternoon, authorities said.</p> <p>McFadden said the breakthrough in the case came thanks to both “community tips” and “good old fashioned police work.” The arrest came about a year and a half after the first killing in April 21 shook the community, and less than a month after the most recent shooting.</p> <p>Authorities linked six gun murders in the California cities to a single killer in early 2021. Another victim survived being shot in what authorities on Saturday described as a “reign of terror.”</p> <p>The killings are believed to have begun in East Oakland when 39-year-old Miguel Vasquez Serrano was shot dead. Most recently, investigators have linked the Sept. 27 murder of Lorenzo Lopez Sr. to the serial killer. Five of the killer’s seven victims have been Hispanic, but police haven’t revealed if they believe they were targeted.</p> <p>“We don’t know what the motive is. What we do believe is that it’s mission-oriented,” Stockton police chief Stanley McFadden said Oct. 4. “This person’s on a mission.”</p> <p>Ballistic evidence has linked the murders to each other. And just last week, police released footage of a person of interest they believed could be the killer.</p> <p>Stockton Mayor Kevin Lincoln on Saturday said members of the community can now “rest a little bit easier tonight.”</p> <p>“I want to make this very very clear, to the people of Stockton, to the United States and around the world. When the people of Stockton come together and we unite we can get things done. Stockton will be a place where people can live, raise a family and grow a business,” Lincoln said.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/15 Lynnwood police target rise in retail thefts
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/lynnwood-pd-battle-upward-trend-in-retail-theft-through-operation#
GIST	<p>LYNNWOOD, Wash. — Lynnwood police are taking action to stop retail theft in the city, which has been on an upward trend over the last few years, according to officials.</p> <p>On Thursday, Lynnwood police partnered with Lowes and Home Depot for an emphasis operation focused on stopping theft and arresting suspects in real-time.</p> <p>Police arrested every person who was observed stealing merchandise from the stores. The operation resulted in seven theft-related arrests, one intoxication-related arrested, and three arrests related to drugs.</p> <p>Police said at one point during the operation, there were roughly 6-10 squad cars in the parking lot with their emergency lights on, yet thieves entered the store anyway with the intent to steal items.</p>

	<p>Officials said the trend of retail theft has been on an upward trend over the past few years to the point where only a small percentage is being reported to law enforcement.</p> <p>The Lynnwood Police Department said it plans to do more operations like this one in the future with other local businesses.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/16 Grim pattern: targeted killings of police rise
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/violent-week-a-grim-sign-as-targeted-killings-of-police-rise/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — The shooting deaths of two Connecticut officers and wounding of a third punctuated an especially violent week for police across the U.S. and fit into a grim pattern: Even as more officers left their jobs in the past two years, the number targeted and killed rose.</p> <p>According to organizations that track violence against police, 56 officers have been killed by gunfire this year — 14% more than this time last year and about 45% ahead of 2020's pace. The country is on track for the deadliest year since 67 officers were killed in 2016.</p> <p>While the figures include a few officers killed by accidental gunfire, the number of ambushes in which police were injured or killed in surprise attacks with little chance to defend themselves has soared since 2020 and accounts for nearly half the officers killed this year.</p> <p>Such an attack apparently struck Wednesday in Bristol, Connecticut, where the state police said Bristol Police Sgt. Dustin Demonte and Officer Alex Hamzy were killed and Officer Alec Iurato was wounded when they responded to a 911 call that appears to have been “a deliberate act to lure law enforcement to the scene.”</p> <p>At least 11 police officers were shot around the country this week, including one fatally in Greenville, Mississippi, and another in Las Vegas.</p> <p>“Those are really scary numbers for law enforcement, not just for individual officers, but for the organizations they work for, which have to be taking this into account as they’re hiring, retaining and training officers,” said Bill Alexander, executive director of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial, which tracks officer deaths in the line of duty.</p> <p>“It’s not lost on the officers that the job they signed up for has become more dangerous,” he said. “That has to be taking a significant mental toll on the agencies at large and the individual officers doing the work.”</p> <p>An off-duty officer was among five people killed in a shooting rampage by a 15-year-old boy in Raleigh, North Carolina, on Thursday evening, but it wasn’t clear if the officer was targeted. In late June, a man in the Appalachian foothills of eastern Kentucky opened fire on officers serving a warrant in a domestic violence case, killing three and wounding five others — a scene that deputies called “pure hell.”</p> <p>The Fraternal Order of Police reported that through Sept. 30 of this year, there had been 63 ambush-style attacks in which officers were wounded, with 93 officers shot, 24 fatally. That’s a lower number of such attacks than the first nine months of 2021, when there were 75 ambushes of officers, with 93 shot and 21 killed. The total number of ambushes in which police were hurt last year more than doubled from 2020.</p> <p>The increase in ambushes and killings of police comes at a time when many departments around the country face staffing shortages, with some agencies down hundreds of officers and struggling to fill vacancies.</p> <p>COVID-19 has been the biggest killer of police officers in the past few years, with 280 deaths in 2020, 467 in 2021 and 64 so far this year, the Officer Down Memorial Page reports. But many officers have retired early or resigned out of frustration with what they see as sagging public support amid “defund police”</p>

efforts prompted by the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis officer and the deaths of other Black people at the hands of law enforcement.

The number of officers nationally fell from roughly 719,000 in 2020 to 688,000 in 2021, according to data reported to the FBI. Hiring of officers has rebounded some this year, but resignations and retirements continue to prove a challenge for departments around the country, the Washington, D.C.-based Police Executive Research Forum found in a survey early this year.

Mike Zaro is the police chief in Lakewood, Washington, a city of about 60,000 people where four officers were assassinated at a coffee shop in 2009. He was the assistant chief at the time, and he said the department continues to see officers retiring early due to anxiety and stress that can be traced back to the attack.

“I started back in the early ’90s, and back then and for a long time you just sucked it up and moved on whenever you dealt with any trauma related to the job, whether it was someone else’s or your own,” Zaro said. “After 2009, something of that magnitude, we recognized we had to try and do something different. We worked on the fly to develop methods of encouraging people to seek help. ... Eventually it became ingrained in what we do. Today it’s called officer wellness.”

Zaro recalls how crucial the support of the community was in helping the department get through the aftermath of the killings. Such support, he said, is instrumental in helping officers accept the risks they face.

Many law enforcement supporters worry about whether departments still have such backing, given the tenor of the national discourse around policing. They stress that questionable or illegal uses of force by officers are the rare exception, not the rule, but police have lost trust from many people outraged at repeatedly seeing cellphone or body-camera videos online of officers abusing their power.

“It would be infinitely harder to accept those risks and deal with the loss if the community is either suggesting the officers deserved it or making excuses for the person who committed the crime or just not supporting them,” Zaro said. “It’s more imperative now to make that part of the conversation, given the lashing out at police we’ve seen nationwide over the last couple of years.”

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HEADLINE	11/15 Tacoma PD warns of local phone scam
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article267356792.html
GIST	<p>The Tacoma Police Department is warning residents of a reported phone scam with callers impersonating law enforcement to fraudulently obtain bank information and money transfers from victims.</p> <p>According to the alert issued Saturday on its social media account, the callers are demanding banking information while impersonating police working a fake drug case with U.S. Border Patrol agents.</p> <p>As the scam is described by police, the caller tells the person they are a Tacoma Police officer working with Border Patrol “and a package of drugs has been found with the victim’s name and address on it. Once the victim denies knowledge of the package, they demand the victim’s bank account numbers to verify.”</p> <p>The department added that the scam “has resulted in money being transferred to the scammers.”</p> <p>TPD in its alert said on Saturday, “No police agency will call your house and demand money be transferred over the phone. Not TPD, not (Pierce County Sheriff’s Department) not Border Patrol.”</p> <p>The calls may involve spoofed numbers, where the caller ID looks to be legitimate.</p> <p>TPD added that “Even if the phone number appears to come from a police agency, this is a SCAM!”</p> <p>A similar scam was reported in the state in early 2021 targeting Latinos.</p>

	<p>The scam is the latest twist on fraudulent phone calls involving phony officials. Recent well-known scams have involved phony outstanding warrant calls seeking money or gift cards as payment, or fake IRS agents demanding payment.</p> <p>With open enrollment now happening for Medicare recipients, warnings also have been issued about scammers targeting elderly participants in health-care coverage related calls.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/14 Kirkland auto shops fed up by crime trend
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/local-kirkland-auto-shops-fed-up-by-recent-trend-in-theft#
GIST	<p>KIRKLAND, Wash. — Several auto shops in the Kirkland area are fed up after they say they’ve become repeat targets for criminals.</p> <p>From break-ins to thefts, these owners say enough is enough and something needs to be done to put a stop to it all.</p> <p>“On a daily occurrence – something is going on,” said Josh Folsom, owner of Doug’s Auto Tune & Repair.</p> <p>Attempted theft of a catalytic converter is the latest crime Josh Folsom has had to deal with.</p> <p>“Since the end of 2018, Sunday was my 40th incident in here – in our shop,” said Folsom.</p> <p>He owns Doug’s Auto Tune and Repair in Kirkland and says just in the last week alone the shop’s been targeted by criminals 3 times.</p> <p>Last month a thief broke in and took off with this car.</p> <p>An arrest was made from Sunday’s incident, but Folsom wants to see stiffer penalties for those he says are causing major problems.</p> <p>“The car business is being hit a ton, so if we’re not holding criminals accountable, how do we continue with business?”</p> <p>Nearby at East-Lake Auto Brokers, a family-owned used-car dealership, they’ve had to deal with both vehicle and catalytic converter thefts.</p> <p>“We’ve had more issues in the past two years than we have in the 13 previous years. It’s very frustrating Tony Wood co-owns Kirkland transmission.</p> <p>“We did recently have some vandalism to a customer’s vehicle that we sublet to another shop here. The headlight got stolen from here and they drilled a hole in the fuel tank,” said Wood</p> <p>These challenges aren’t only becoming costly but are leaving these businesses frustrated.</p> <p>“There’s tons of anger, last few years, tons of anger. don’t know what to do. We just don’t know what to do,” said Folsom.</p> <p>We did reach out to City Manager’s office to see what’s being done about the rise in crime targeting auto shops.</p> <p>A spokesperson for the department responded with this statement: KPD is working hard to curb break-ins reported at auto shops in Totem Lake. Specific steps we’re taking include:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KPD's Pro-Act Investigative Unit - Car prowls are the main focus of this group and they will continue their proactive efforts • Continuing to encourage business owners to report crimes • Recommending to businesses ways to reduce crime using crime prevention environmental design and other strategies aimed at deterring illegal activities • Working with business owners to brainstorm other crime prevention ideas <p>KPD is also looking at ways to increase police presence in the neighborhood and considering overtime patrols. We agree that there has been an increase in property crimes involving vehicles in the area and we're taking active steps to address this issue.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/14 Pierce Co. sheriff trial set for 21 Nov
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/pre-trial-hearing-sheriff-troyer-newspaper-carrier-case/MNJ2C6ZTGZFMXSAGK3DCRCYO4/
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — Pierce County Sheriff Ed Troyer has a pre-trial hearing scheduled in district court on Friday for a pre-trial hearing, ahead of a late-November trial date.</p> <p>In October 2021, Troyer was charged with criminal misdemeanor counts of false reporting and making a false or misleading statement to a public servant.</p> <p>The charges stem from a January 2021 confrontation between Troyer and Black newspaper carrier Sedrick Altheimer.</p> <p>Altheimer was working his regular delivery route on Jan. 27 when Troyer began following him in his car around 2 a.m.</p> <p>Altheimer continued working the route, noticing that a car was following him. After stopping at a house, Altheimer approached the car to find out why he was being followed.</p> <p>Altheimer went up to the car and began talking to Troyer, whom he did not recognize as the sheriff. He asked Troyer if he was a cop, and Troyer did not identify himself as law enforcement, according to the AG's office.</p> <p>Troyer continued to ask Altheimer questions and accused him of being a thief, documents say. Altheimer returned to his car and drove away and Troyer continued following.</p> <p>Around 2:05 a.m., Troyer called 911 and reported that he caught someone in his driveway who "just threatened to kill me," according to 911 records.</p> <p>Over 40 law enforcement officers from multiple agencies responded. Altheimer denied making any threats to Troyer, blocking Troyer's car or entering his driveway.</p> <p>When questioned that night, Troyer walked back his initial claim that Altheimer had threatened him, according to police reports.</p> <p>Altheimer later filed a lawsuit for \$5 million, claiming he was racially profiled by the Pierce County sheriff. He claimed his constitutional rights were violated and he suffered severe emotional distress.</p> <p>Then in July, a judge revoked Troyer's release on personal recognizance, ruling that he would have to pay \$100,000 bail.</p> <p>That order came after Altheimer filed an anti-harassment protection order against Troyer in May, asserting that Troyer had followed him in a vehicle while he was out delivering newspapers, in an attempt to intimidate him. That order was granted in early June.</p>

	<p>The judge said that Troyer’s violation of court orders intended to protect Altheimer represents “an egregious and potentially dangerous violation.”</p> <p>“The court has determined that a showing has been made that Mr. Troyer is a substantial danger to the community, especially to Mr. Altheimer,” the judge said.</p> <p>Troyer has consistently denied allegations of racism.</p> <p>His trial is scheduled for November 21.</p> <p>If convicted of both offenses, Troyer could be sentenced to up to 364 days in jail and fined up to \$5,000.</p>
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